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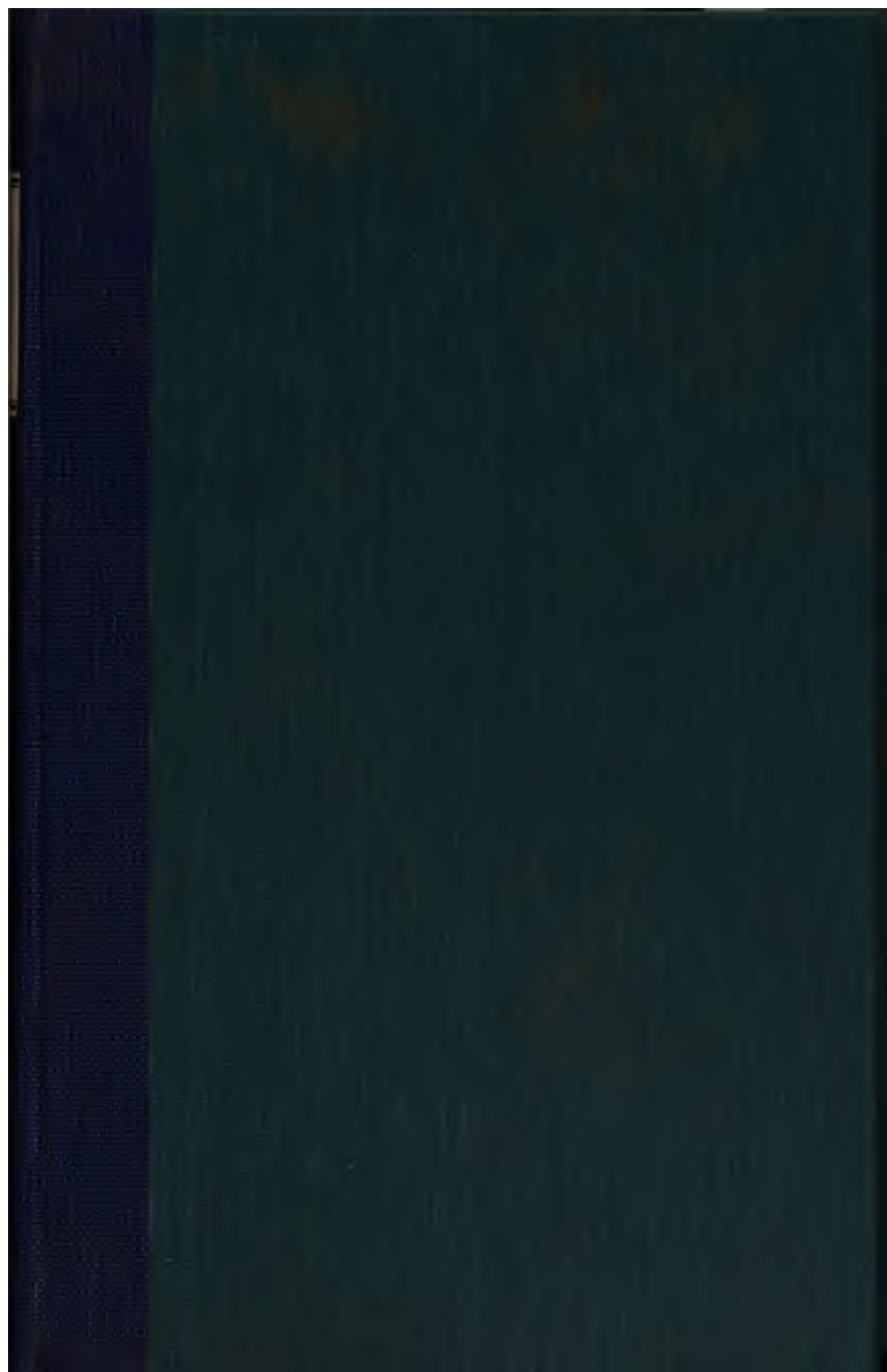
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1860
COTTAGE ON THE CLIFF.
A
SEA SIDE STORY.

BY
CATHERINE G. WARD.

Author of the
Mysterious Marriage, Family Portraits, Rose of Claremont &c.



NEW YORK.
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THE
COTTAGE ON THE CLIFF.

CHAPTER I.

" Proteus

I am sorry, I must never trust thee more,
But count the world a stranger for thy sake.
The private wound is deepest : O time, most curst,
'Mongst all foes, that a friend should be the worst !"

IN a beautiful, sequestered, and delightfully romantic part of the sea-coast, which is bounded on the north and east by the German Ocean, within a mile and a half distant of the east side of Cromer, which has of late years become the resort of the most fashionable company at the bathing seasons, and situated on a cliff of considerable height, projected a ruinous old building, known by the name of the Cottage on the Cliff: for it was certainly ruinous about the period at which this history commences, though it has since undergone some necessary repairs, before it could be found habitable for its present possessor, Captain Singleton, and in its altered state we will endeavour to convey both that and Captain Singleton to the attention of our readers; whose extraordinary disposition, and whose singular habitude of manners, befitted him alone to become the inmate of so solitary a place; for no human being else could have lived in this rude and uncultivated part of the sea-coast, which, either in winter or summer, was subject to the approach of the most violent tempests, on which many a shipwrecked mariner had been destined to breathe his last sigh, and many a portly vessel had been dashed to fragments on the rocks; yet there was no place which afforded such picturesque scenery

to the eye of the traveller, nor any situation on the Norfolk coast which held forth so many attractions to the invalid who was desirous of mingling pursuits of pleasure with the hope also of a speedy restoration to health.

Yet such were not the hopes, such were not the motives, which had guided Captain Singleton, and his daughter, a beautiful girl, apparently about seventeen years of age, to the Cliffs of Cromer, who was a man of such reserved, gloomy, austere, and retired habits, that no one ventured to inquire into his circumstances or seemed solicitous or anxious to court an acquaintance which he himself appeared sedulously to avoid, and proudly to disdain: it is not to be wondered, therefore, that Captain Singleton had but few associates, his family consisting only of himself, his daughter, and two domestics, a male and female, and these formed the whole of his establishment.

Still another personage was occasionally applied to when his assistance was thought necessary, and this was a man of some consequence in the town of Cromer; for he had acquired wealth by his hardy occupation; having formerly been a fisherman so successful in his voyages and trading on the coast, that it had long since enabled him to retire, and live with ease and competency on his fruitful gains.

He alone seemed to be on terms of familiar intimacy with Captain Singleton and his family; it is not that a congeniality of soul or sentiment had driven these two personages together by sympathy or friendship, for Peter Blust, which was the name of the fisher, united to the character of a rough seaman, habits by no means similar to those of the highly finished gentleman and scholar, both of which Captain Singleton confessedly was; still it was certain that he very frequently visited at the house of Peter, and that their acquaintance began in a very few days after he had landed at the Cliffs of Cromer, in the following manner: he had in vain sought for a retired residence on that part of the coast least subject to the approach of the new comers, who daily visited Cromer at the usual period of sea-bathing, and, in one of his solitary walks by the sea-side, he espied the habitation of the fisher. It was a singularly beautiful, wild and romantic spot, and though it was a

large, square and handsome built house, of modern architecture, yet it might be said, that it was rising from the white bosom of the ocean, in the midst of the most flowery fields and pastures ; still on every side, the wide expanse was bounded by the sea-coast, which it so effectually commanded a prospect of, that all vessels were seen, going to and fro, that sailed in and out of the harbour of Cromer.

Captain Singleton stopped and gazed with unspeakable satisfaction at the lovely scenery which every where surrounded this enchanting spot ; so remote, so solitary, and yet so boundless and rich in nature's pleasing variety. Some of the finest milch cows he had ever seen were feeding in the pasture, and being milking-time, two young maidens appeared with their milking-pails, followed by a peasant youth, who occasionally assisted them in their employment.

"Haste ye, Anne," cried one of them, as she tript along with her pail, and gaily chaunting the sag end of a merry ditty, "haste ye, and get in the milking before the supper, Anne ; for do you know that Miss Jessy has promised Walter and I that we shall go and see the wake to-night in the village ?"

"Wake in the village ! is the wench mad ?" exclaimed the youth, "why, that wont be till after midnight, and 'tis a likely matter that old master will let any of us be out after dark ; no, no ! 'tis safe bind, safe find, at Herring Dale, I promise you. Wake, indeed ! you had better say your prayers, like all good maids, and let such vagaries alone ; for what does it matter what Miss Jessy says ? pretty soul, she is main kind to be sure ! but old master is as stubborn as a rock ; you might as well talk to the winds, as persuade him to any thing."

"I don't care for old master one brass farthing," cried the spirited maiden, snapping her finger in the youth's face, "and you are as cross-grained a soul as ever lived, Davy ; but I shall go to the wake for all you, or old master either !"

"You had better mind your milking, and say nothing about it, Anne," retorted Davy, "for you are just as like to go to the wake as I am to a harvest supper."

The approach of Captain Singleton very soon put an end to any

further controversy between them, and he inquired of the youth if he knew of any habitation or cottage which was unoccupied round the sea-coast. To which Davy replied,—

“No your honour, none that would be fitting for such a gentleman as you to live in; there is, indeed, an old tumble-down sort of a house on the top cliff, of the that has had no mortal soul in it for this many a long year; and good reason why, because they say it was haunted by a spirit, which had no harm in it neither, for it was only a young lady, who sung sweetly, and then vanished away again. So you see, Sir, last year, my master, who is a bold man, and who neither fears ghosts nor spirits of any kind whatever, hearing the Cottage on the Cliff was to be pulled down and sold, goes to the owner, who has since died at sea, and purchased it; but he was bravely taken in, and swore outrageously, for it is all a ruin, Sir. It is as rotten as a pear; there is not a whole plank about it, and whoever goes into it is sure to have it tumble about his ears, so master never goes near it. Lord bless you, Sir, it is not strong enough to bear the body of a sea-gull!”

“So much the better,” cried Captain Singleton, “then the sea-gull and I must shortly be acquainted; or in other words, my honest friend, as this Cottage on the Cliff seems wholly useless to your master, I will make it useful to me; and will either become a tenant or a purchaser of it, just as he pleases.”

“You, Sir, live in the Cottage on the Cliff!” cried David, staring with the utmost astonishment, “you are jesting, Sir!”

“Why, truly, friend, I do not look like a man who is much given to jesting,” answered Captain Singleton, “I therefore wish to make proposals about this cottage to your master, which if he is inclined to accept, we will conclude the bargain immediately.”

David very easily discovered that Captain Singleton was neither a jesting man, nor one to be jested with, and consequently set about obeying his orders with the utmost alacrity, by showing him the shortest way he could think of to the habitation of the fisher.

CHAPTER II.

“ Rather rejoicing to see another merry,
Than merry at any thing which profess’d
To make him rejoice. A gentleman of all
Temperance ; but leave we him to his events,
With a prayer that they may prove prosperous.”

CAPTAIN SINGLETON entered the apartment into which he was conducted by David, with the air of a man who, though he had been accustomed to ceremony, was not fond of it, and when he beheld the old fisherman seated at a table, plentifully supplied with his favourite geneva, and regaling himself with pipes and tobacco, he hesitated to advance, fearful of being considered an intrusive visiter ; but never had he viewed a countenance more conciliating, or a set of features on which nature had stamped the seal of bravery and humanity so forcibly as on those of the hardy seaman, whom Captain Singleton immediately addressed on the subject of his visit, and offering some slight apology for the abruptness of his appearance there ; to which Peter replied,—

“ Why, as to that, Sir, you are welcome once and welcome twice, as the saying is ; as in the first place you are coming to serve me, for it will be doing me a service to take a tumble-down crazy house off my hands ; and in the next place you are welcome because you are a stranger, and entitled to the rights of hospitality. I am an old seaman, Sir, whom Providence has protected from many a hard gale and rough sea, and though I don’t like new faces, shiver my top-sails, if I don’t see that in your’s I like better than ever I beheld in my life ! Come, will you please to take some grog ? but mayhap you may choose to have a morsel of something to eat first, and if that is the case, why, sit down and make yourself free and welcome. Davy, go and tell my girls to get the supper ready, and send it in immediately.”

So rapid had been the speech of the fisher, that it was not till after David had departed that Captain Singleton could find means to edge in a word, and, although to professions, of almost every kind, he had an aversion, yet here was a cordial drop, so genuine

and pure in its kind, that he had no power or inclination to refuse it, and without further ceremony drew a chair close to the table at which the fisher was sitting, and helped himself to a glass of water, which so exceedingly astonished Peter, that he exclaimed,—

“Shiver my top-sails! that cock wont fight, Captain. I never drink water myself when I can get brandy, and don’t like to see my friends do so, when there is plenty of something better in the house to offer them.” On which Captain Singleton mildly replied,—

“But if your friends should prefer water to any thing else, would you not be kind enough to indulge them, Mr. Blust, as I am inclined to think you will me, when I assure you that I prefer water to any other drink.”

“Why, as to that you may please yourself, though you don’t happen to please me,” gruffly replied Peter, at the same moment that he took an additional whiff at his pipe, “if you don’t drink, why, I expect you to eat, that is all, and so the one must make up for the other. Here, girls!—Jess—Olive! why don’t you make haste with the supper?”

“I beg you will not hurry them,” cried Captain Singleton, perceiving that impatience was now strongly blended in the countenance of his host, who had also raised his voice to a higher key, “I positively will leave your house this moment if you use any ceremony on my account.”

“Shiver my top-sails! if I let you though, before you have made a hearty good supper,” cried Peter, and David announcing that it was quite ready, the fisher arose and led the way to another apartment, where a table was set out with a profusion of the most delicate meat pasties, and every thing that could tempt the appetite to partake of. There were only two covers, however, placed, which intimated that no other guests would be present, at which the fisher glancing his eyes slyly at David, observed, that his girls were yet chickens, and were shy ones.

“So, Captain, you will excuse them to-night,” cried he, “in time they will be used to see you, and then they will talk to you; but the girls are now gone to their roost, I suppose. Humsays, how I love them! they are a couple of the finest chicks that were ever hatched, Captain. There’s my Jessy, with her laughing blue

eyes, sets my anchor afloat whenever I am a cup too low; and there's my Olive, with her beautiful black ones, when I am apt to be a little boisterous and rough, tempers me to mildness by a tear, which, when I see it trickling down her fair face, makes me as quiet and as harmless as the dove; so, shiver my top-sails! they have me both ways; one takes me by storm, and the other subdues me by her softness, and makes me submit without any violence at all."

To all this eloquence, pronounced on the merits of his daughters, Captain Singleton advanced not a syllable; nay, at the very mention of the name of a female he seemed to start with involuntary horror, a cloud of sorrow passed over his brow, and a struggling sigh was checked in its progress by an expression of fixed and unchangeable hatred, which, though reason tempered somewhat of its asperity, had not yet faded on his recollection; but this emotion was not perceived by the fisher, or if perceived, attributed to any other cause than the existing one which Captain Singleton had exhibited; in a few minutes, however, he recovered his self-possession, and suddenly changed the channel of the fisher's favourite topic, by adverting to the business which brought him there, namely, to become a tenant or purchaser of the Cottage on the Cliff.

"Are you willing that I should become a purchaser of this cottage?" added he, "or will you receive me only as the tenant; if so, name your terms and I will freely give them to you."

"Avast there, Captain!" cried the fisher "a word or two to that bargain, if you please. Shiver my top-sails! do you think I have a mind to be hanged for your sake? Me, Peter Blust, who has weathered the tempest these thirty years without a rope-yarn being put about his neck, though he has handled many a one with his hands. Bethink you that I am going to do a dirty action at last in my old days, and die like a dog, Captain?"

"You must speak more plainly, Sir, or I cannot understand you," cried Captain Singleton, with a slight colouring mounting to his cheek, and a more than usual sparkling of his eye; "I came hither to offer you a fair proposal, like an honest man, and as an honest man I wish to depart."

‘ Well, and who hinders you ? ’ vociferated Peter, “ if you are so self-willed, and must needs fire before you are fired at. I say, if I sell you the old crazy house that stands on the top of the cliff I shall be a scoundrel, that is all.”

“ And why so ? ” demanded Captain Singleton, “ is it not your own ? Has any one else a right to dispose of it ? ”

To which Peter immediately answered, “ You may go and ask that of the spirit that walks there every night when the wind is easterly, and the sea-gulls, that have roosted there for above this twelvemonth. To be plain with you, Captain, I have been nicely taken in by the fellow that sold me this confounded old water-butt ; I thought it would have made my girls a nice bit of a summer-house, when the weather was fine, so I gave him the shiners for it as freely as I would have blowed a seaman’s whistle ; but, shiver my top-sails ! when I came to look at it, it was not worth a rotten rope’s yarn ! the chimneys are all blown down, and it is nothing better than a sheer hulk ! so I have let it tumble to pieces, inch by inch, this many a long year, for the d—l himself could not find a hole to put his nose in, when the weather is stormy ; saving all this, Captain, it is haunted : ghosts dance it there by moon-light, as merrily as maidens do at a gossip’s wedding. Now, I say, Captain, if I were to take money of you for this crazy old Cottage on the Cliff, I should deserve to be hanged ; for if you were to sleep there only one night I am apt to think it would be your last, that’s all.”

The rough but genuine sincerity with which this oration was delivered, so perfectly convinced Captain Singleton of the integrity and well-meaning intentions of the honest fisher, that he exclaimed,—“ Mr. Blust, I see clearly that you are an honest man, and would scorn to make a dupe of the inexperienced but confiding stranger, while I, believe me, would equally disdain to flatter one whom I thought unworthy of : thus far we understand each other ; I think well of you, and you have no reason to think ill of me ; but these are not times, my dear Sir, to trust men either by looks or words, actions alone must become vouchers for their credit. Suppose then I were to deposit a sum of money in your hands, sufficient to defray the expense of putting this cottage in repair

for the reception of my family, or that I am willing to take it in the ruinous condition which you have represented it to be, would you still have any objection to part with it?"

"Shiver my top-sails! no, Captain," cried Peter, "if you are so fond of crazy vessels, take it and welcome, and repair it how you will, and when you will; I will have nothing to do with that part of the business: I will only receive a third part of what I gave the tapster for it at the first, and that I am almost ashamed of doing, only I know that you are too proud to accept of it on any other terms."

"Too just I hope I am, Mr. Blust," cried Captain Singleton, "to wish to possess myself of any man's property, however small, without paying for it." On these words a sum was offered to the fisher, which he accepted, and Captain Singleton became the owner of the Cottage on the Cliff, which, after being duly inspected by several workmen, was pronounced only fit for the tenants of the air, by which it was so infested, that they could hardly find means of approaching the interior, without disturbing thousands from their nests, which they had built there so long, in no danger or fear of being molested by their mortal enemy, rapacious man! It was also overshadowed with moss and ivy, so that where the windows had once been, was now scarcely perceptible; but this the Captain insisted should not be removed, as he loved to see both moss and ivy creep along the walls. It had four chambers above, which had been sleeping rooms, and the same number below; but so mutilated in their appearance, that it was impossible to define what sort of colour or ornaments had once been bestowed on them.

The garden appeared to be the only thing that retained a vestige of having possessed objects which once had the power of inviting the eye, and regulating the sense, for here and there a tuft of violets still bloomed, amidst the nauseous weeds which had so long been permitted to dwell beside them. There was a cowslip-bed which sent forth its sweets in spite of the reptiles which crawled over them; but the most striking object in view from this obsolete and solitary habitation, were the white cliffs which surrounded it, so stupendous, and beautifully wild and romantic in appearance, that Captain Singleton as he contemplated the ocean that rolled

beneath them, declared that he considered the prospect from the Cottage the most enviable in the world : " For here," uttered he, turning toward Peter, who often accompanied him to this solitary spot while the repairs were going forward in the most active preparation, " here I have only the elements to contend with, which is far better than to be at enmity with man. He is more turbulent than the ocean, and I would sooner listen to the howling winds that pour through my casements, than be the sport of more furious passions in the breast of my fellow-creatures. The waves are stilled, the winds are hushed, by the power of the Infinite Being who rules over them ; but when is the violence of the warring passions controuled in the human bosom ? answer me that. You, Mr. Blust, have never been doomed to bleed under their raging influence—I have ; forgive me, if the recollection of past injuries wrings from my heart a bitterness of spirit, which twenty years have not been able to extinguish or quench from my feverish breast."

The fisher wanted but little of human discernment, with which he was tolerably gifted, to perceive that the man before him groaned under a burden of intolerable anguish, and that he now sought retirement merely to conceal the sorrows of a wounded heart ; but from what source these sorrows sprung, or by what hand this wound was inflicted, Peter could not define, and it was very unlikely that he ever would ascertain the secret malady which seemed so deeply to have taken root in the mind of Captain Singleton ; yet there was an innate propensity in the disposition of the fisher to feel for the unhappy and the oppressed, and the same disposition to relieve them, whenever he considered them to be the objects of want or penury. He had an overflowing purse, as well as an overflowing heart, in the cause of humanity, and that he never spared when occasion required it ; but in the case of Captain Singleton he could do nothing but what was presented in the usual form of civility and urbanity of manner, offered to a stranger landing on the coast. Money, it was evident, he did not want ; and though Peter was a man of all others the least prone to suspicion, or even curiosity, yet he was anxious to learn the history of the recluse ; and there were certain times, also, when he suspected that all was not right in the affairs of the Captain, and that some motive of ex-

traordinary import had induced him to purchase the Cottage on the Cliff under circumstances of so mysterious a nature, and to make a recluse both of himself and his beautiful daughter, for beautiful Miss Singleton confessedly was, of whom the fisher had only once accidentally caught a sight; but the face of Agatha, once seen, could not be easily forgotten: they were features which struck deeply on the first glance of the beholder, and riveted their expression on the heart, which seemed to plead for, rather than demand, an interest there.

Agatha was indeed somewhat below the middle or ordinary size of women, but so beautifully formed was her small and delicate shape, that she might have been a model for the statuary; her limbs being just of such sufficient fulness, as to convey the idea of the most perfect loveliness of woman, without either grossness or vulgarity being attached to it: she had indeed the looks of an aerial being, so light, graceful, and swift were her movements. But the face of Agatha was not correspondent with her form; here there was a dignity without pride, and a softness without weakness, or even timidity: her dark hazel eyes shone with brilliancy, but they were tempered with a mild and piercing expression of something more than sadness; and it might be said that, when she smiled, she looked more than mortal, for it was not the smile of gladness, or of the expression of youthful sprightliness.

Her complexion was of the hue of the palest lily, which in any other countenance but that of Agatha's would have been the effect of langour or indisposition; but a word, a single word, pronounced by her with enthusiasm, brought a colour into her cheek, bright as the carnation tints of morn; and then her eyes sparkled like glittering gems—so soft, so hallowed, chaste and pure, that they seemed the messengers of Heaven; for nothing earthly appeared to engage the beautiful and animated speaker, when directing her discourse to her father, which Captain Singleton apparently was, and who she seemed to worship above all created things; yet it was remarkable that he never addressed her as his daughter, and paid her but little attention; at least, he never showed any softness toward her, as fathers were wont to do to a favourite child, but when Agatha was not present he loved to dwell on her merits with a peculiar delight and satisfaction.

It is true that Miss Singleton seldom strayed beyond the boundaries of the Cottage on the Cliff, in which the Captain had been a resident for nearly three months before he received any invitation to the house of the fisher ; for though Agatha had often conversed with the daughters of Peter, the pretty Jessy, and the beautiful Olive, yet Captain Singleton had never permitted her to form any closer intimacy with them, though the sweet girls themselves longed to court the society of the charming Agatha, which for a while gave great umbrage to the feelings and the pride of honest Peter ; and on his daughter Jessy, one day, informing him that she had just parted with Miss Singleton, whom she had been taking a walk on the sea-shore, he quickly replied,—

“ Shiver my top-sails ! and what did you do that for ? when you know how shy and distant the Captain has been toward us, only because you happened to invite his daughter to come over to Herring Dale to take a dish of tea with us, and now you must needs go, you silly wench, and pop yourself in the way of this Miss Singleton again ! I tell you, Jess, you are as good as she, though maybe you may not be quite so learned, and I will have you to humbly to no man's child, who seems to consider you so much beneath her. There's your sister Olive—you would not catch her running after this Captain's daughter, if the Captain's daughter did not run after her, I warrant me ! no, no ; my Olive is too spirited a wench for that !—but you, you little soft melting fool”——

The fisher paused, for Jessy was his favourite ; notwithstanding the lecture he was now giving her ; and a tear which was just beginning to start in a pair of the loveliest blue eyes in the world, very rapidly changed his manner toward her. The tear was kissed off, while the lovely girl, thus encouraged by his returning smile of good humour, timidly addressed him.

“ Indeed, father, I did not run after Miss Singleton, nor attempted to converse with her till, in a voice of the sweetest affability, she inquired after my health and my sister's ; and then I walked by her side for a considerable way on the sea-beach, and found her such a delightful companion ! I do not mean that she is a merry one, father, for Miss Singleton often sighs when no one is observing her ; and when I asked her if she did not feel very

solitary since she had come to live at the Cottage on the Cliff, she replied,—

“I ought not to feel solitary in any place, or in any country, that my father inhabits, but perhaps I should feel dull if he were not with me; it is my father, who makes me love every thing, whether I like it or not.” ‘So,’ says I.”—Jessy paused and laughed, and the fisher exclaimed, looking at her arch and pretty turn of features with unspeakable delight and satisfaction.

“Well, hussy, what did you say? didst tell her you had a foolish fond old father, who never forced you to like or love any thing contrary to your nature or inclination;—dilst tell her that, you gipsy? and that I take more pleasure in seeing my girls happy than in any one thing beside.” To which Jessy, with a sweet smile, replied,—

“I did, indeed, tell Miss Singleton something like that, father, and she seemed delighted at the account I gave her of the merry lives we live at Herring Dale; so I have been thinking that, as to-morrow is my birth-day——”

“You have a mind to invite Miss Singleton to be one of the party, to partake of the sports and merriments on the happy day; is that it, my Jessy?” cried the fisher.—“Heaven bless thee, thou art a kind-hearted wench, after all! and, shiver my top-sails! if I don’t go and ask the Captain to grant me this favour, though I don’t like to ask favours from any man. Yet I will stretch a point once, girl, for thy sake, because I know it glads thy warm little heart to see folks merry.”

“And will you indeed, dear father, go up to the Cottage on the Cliff, and ask permission of the Captain to let Miss Singleton join our party to-morrow?” cried the pretty Jessy, whose eyes sparkled with pleasure as she anticipated the happiness she should again experience in the company of the beautiful Agatha,—“I will run and tell my sister Olive that she may expect to see Miss Singleton at the birth-day feast, to-morrow.”

Jessy was now on the wing, had not the fisher exclaimed,—“Avast there, if you please, my merry mermaid! how do you know, though I am going to ask the favour of the Captain, whether I may succeed or no? and if I meet with a refusal, shiver my

top-sails, if I ever ask him another while my name is Peter Blust ! but mind me, Jess, not a word to Olive or to any body else about the matter—mum, if you please till I come back from the Captain."

"What, must I not tell my sister Olive, the pleasure my dear father is preparing for us ?" cried Jessy in a coaxing accent.

"Shiver my top-sails ! if you do," cried the fisher.—But Jessy was flown ; her light foot had already ascended the staircase which led to the chamber of her sister, who was at that moment consulting with Alice, their old housekeeper, on the manner in which the pasties were to be made, in honour of her sister's natal day ; and as Jessy advanced toward them, she heard her father desire Davy to saddle the white naggie, as he was going on some little business to Captain Singleton's.

"What, on such a night as this, Sir," cried David, "when the wind blows easterly, and 'tis dark as pitch ! must you needs choose such a night to go to the Cottage on the Cliff ?"

"And what is that to you, Sir, what night I choose to go and see my friends ?" cried the fisher, highly provoked that David never moved an inch the more for his commands ; "Shiver my top-sails, if the winds blow a hurricane, I will this instant be obeyed !"

David now speedily got out of the sight of his enraged master, and in a few minutes the white naggie was saddled and at the gateway.

"Look to your left, I pray you, master !" cried David, with a most dismayed countenance, as he still held the bridle in his hand, "look, how the gale is coming on ! we shall have a stormy night of it, that is certain."

"Look at your fool's head !" answered the fisher, and instantly vaulting himself on the saddle, trotted, or rather galloped, fearlessly in that perilous, steep, and narrow path which led to the so-much-dreaded Cottage on the Cliff.

CHAPTER III.

"We were as twin'd lambs that did frisk i' the sun,
And bleat the one at th' other : what we chang'd,
Was innocence for innocence ; we knew not
The doctrine of ill doing, no, nor dream'd
That any did."

SCARCE an hour had elapsed after the departure of the fisher from his own habitation before the prediction of honest David was completely verified ; for the winds howled tempestuously, and the pelting rain fell in torrents, while the darkness of the misty atmosphere had increased so greatly as almost to render objects indistinguishable ; in short, there was every distinct sign of an approaching hurricane ; and the lovely daughters of Peter, who had witnessed the departure of their father from their chamber window, now grew fearfully alarmed at the appearance of the coming storm, and trembled for his safety ; and, calling David, besought him instantly to saddle another horse, and go in quest of his master.

"He will never reach the Cottage in such a night as this," exclaimed Jessy, pale and trembling, as she watched the progress of the storm, "he will never be able to ascend the top of that fearful cliff, where the precipice gapes beneath, and the ocean rolls so furiously on every side ; he would be dashed to pieces on the rock, were he once to attempt it. Fly, David, instantly fly ! and save our beloved father from immediate destruction."

"Fly, Miss Jessy !" uttered David, "in God's name, then you must lend me a pair of wings first, for no horse could stand on his legs in the surge just now ; if he had the strength of an elephant in his heels, it would be all up with him before he got over the cliff : as to master, he is safe enough, I warrant me ! he has not gone a step beyond the sign of the Trumpeter, I will wager, and is taking a hearty draught of Shelly's home-brewed ale ; for you know, Miss Jessy, master loves to take care of himself as well as most folks, and if I was to go, without being bidden, to fetch him back again, he would tell me to go to the d—l, and mind my own business."

"And how do you know that your master is safe you ungracious varlet?" cried old Alice, putting on her spectacles, and gazing at the increased violence of the contending elements, "it is well enough for you that are well housed, with your nose in a warm chimney corner, to talk thus: but if my dear master were to perish in this fearful storm, you mongrel, what would the folks think we were all doing at Herring Dale? and, if I was Miss Jessie, I would make you stir your pegs, I warrant me, this moment, or know the reason why!"

"But not at the risk of his life, Alice," uttered the gentle Jessie, "I would not have it said that it was owing to my persuasion that a fellow-creature had endangered his existence, therefore stay, David, and do not seek my father, whom Heaven, I trust, will preserve in safety from the storm; he may by this time be arrived at the Captain's, or taken refuge, as you observe, in the house of Shelty, which is not a mile distant; he has surely got thus far on his journey!"

"Whether or no, my dear young lady, I will go after him," cried David. The reproach which the old housekeeper had thought proper to cast upon him, having roused his sensibility, as well as his anger. "It shall never be said that Davy Holdfast was guilty of the sin of ingratitude to a master he has served faithfully since he was a foot high!—no, Mistress Alice, I will let you see that I am not the mongrel you take me for, neither." To which the impatient Alice replied,—

"You are like to be so, if you stand muttering there for no mortal use, Heaven keep me, but to delay time, for thou knowest I do not care what thou thinkest of me, whether good, bad, or indifferent." But these last words did not reach the ear of the highly offended David, for he had flown to the stable, and was mounted on a steed far more swift and formidable than his master's, and without staying to receive any further instructions from his young ladies, or entering into any fresh controversy with the old housekeeper, he rushed out of the gateway on his flying Pegasus, regardless of the lightning, which now flashed more vividly than before, or the peals of distant thunder, which seemed to threaten the very foundation of the strong-built habitation of Peter Blust; and no sooner was he out of hearing than Alice exclaimed to the lovely girls,—

"Well, Heaven be praised, we have done our duty, and should any accident happen now to our dear and worthy master, we cannot be blamed for our negligence toward him; therefore my sweet children, weep not thus, for it cannot bring your father a moment sooner to your sight: if it should please Heaven to take him to a watery grave we cannot help it, for we did not send him there, you know, my loves; it was his pleasure to go in such a night as this to that fatal Cliff which, report says, has already been the——" The pale complexion of Jessy, and the more death-like countenance of Olive, induced Alice, out of compassion as well as affection for her young mistresses, to change the tenor of her discourse, as she was wandering to something more dreadful in idea than even the danger of the tempest, or perils of the present moment could convey, while the sobbing Jessy instantly exclaimed,—

"Oh, no! Alice, 'twas I that sent my father there, unhappy girl that I am! I am the cause of my dear father's destruction! 'twas I who sent him to the Cottage on the Cliff!"

"You, Miss Jessy!" exclaimed Alice in the utmost astonishment.

"You, Jessy! repeated Olive, ah, me! my dear unhappy sister, what could induce you to an act so rash? my father is wont to do all that Jessy asks—that Jessy wishes; but, in such a night as this, to urge him to go to the Cottage on the Cliff! was it not cruel, Jessy?"

The weeping Jessy, stung to the heart by the reproach of her sister, on being accused of having driven her father out to meet the fury of the tempestuous weather, wept yet more violently than before; at the same moment that she simply related for what purpose he had gone to the Cliff, and reminded Olive that there was no storm expected, or seemed to threaten them, when their father had set out for the residence of Captain Singleton.

"True, Jessy," cried Olive, throwing her arms round the neck of her weeping sister, "pray pardon me if affection for my father carried me a little beyond the bounds of temperance with my sister; nor is it indeed a very likely matter, that you would endanger the life of your father for the sake of one who is an entire stranger, and whom, though you so greatly admire, I do not like."

"Not like Miss Singleton!" cried Jessy in the greatest surprise, as the complexion of Olive had heightened into the deepest blushes of carnation as she made the remark, "not like Miss Singleton!" repeated Jessy, "you astonish me, sister Olive! why, every body likes Miss Singleton who has seen her!"

"Very probably, Jessy," replied Olive, with increased spirit, "all who have *seen her* may like Miss Singleton, but *not all who know her*, and I—I *am one of that number*."

"You cannot know more of Agatha Singleton than I do, Olive; returned Jessy, "and what have you seen in her to dislike more than I have? unkind Olive! why have you conceived prejudices so ungenerous and so illiberal, against one so lovely, so good, so very, very amiable?"

"What, because she is your favourite, does it immediately follow that she is to be mine also?" demanded Olive, with some asperity, "neither do you know that she is as good and as amiable as she appears to be, or that she is the daughter of this Captain Singleton; I, for my part, suspect that she is not."

Jessy, the warm-hearted, good-natured Jessy, not more astonished at her sister's petulance, than hurt at the unkind insinuations she had thrown out against the lovely Agatha, uttered, with involuntary warmth,

"For shame, sister Olive! who has taught you to be so worldly minded? and why is suspicion become the inmate of so pure and artless a bosom, that you must needs form conclusions so ungenerous, nay, so derogatory to the character of Agatha Singleton? if she was not the daughter of Captain Singleton, would she be living under his roof in the manner that she does? or supposing that she is not his child, still Agatha may belong to some dear relative deceased, and in that case, perhaps, he is bound to protect her. 'Tis plain some mystery hangs over the destiny of Captain Singleton, for he is unhappy! and poor Agatha is unhappy too! I wonder much, Olive, that you can indulge in such ungenerous remarks, because I know that your heart is tender, and that you have always felt for the unfortunate!"

A silence of some minutes ensued, during which Olive had totally changed the expression of her countenance, and employed

herself in watching the rain, which still continued to descend in torrents from the heavily surcharged clouds, without deigning once to reply to the affectionate appeal which her sister had made to her feelings.

Meanwhile, Jessy, absorbed in her own reflections, and unable to guess at the remotest cause which Agatha Singleton could have given her sister for the ungenerous sentiments she expressed toward her, or on what grounds her suspicions were founded, and, loving Olive better than any thing in the world beside her father, began heartily to repent of having invited her favourite at so unfavourable a moment, when the slightest prejudice could be entertained against her, and much fearing that, if the Captain really permitted his daughter to make one of the party at the birth-day feast,—that the manners of her sister would be so distant, cold and constrained toward her, as not only to be a drawback on her own pleasurable sensations, but occasion some degree of uneasiness to the lovely Agatha, and that, instead of a day devoted to mirth and joy, it would be one of pain to all parties, and added to this, was the increased anxiety and fear which she endured for the safety of her father, and, though Alice occasionally endeavoured to dissipate from the mind of the suffering Jessy all apprehensions of her master having been exposed to the dangers of the tempest, which was now beginning to abate somewhat of its violence ; still the lovely girl would not be comforted by any argument which the old woman could make use of to relieve the almost insupportable agony of her anxious mind.

In which uncomfortable state we must at present leave her, to inquire after the fisher, and his trusty squire, honest David, who had braved the fury of the elements to go in quest of him ; but as Blood-hound, which was the name of David's courser, was not used to be intimidated, neither the flashes of the vivid lightning, nor the loud peals of thunder, seemed to retard his progress, as he speeded his way forward, and dashed through one of the most perilous paths that ever was attempted on such a night by mortal traveller ; in which, the horse, not less courageous than his master, seemed to put forth the strength of a giant in contending with the fury of the elements, and, in less than half an hour, David, to

his great joy, espied a glimmering light that issued from a window at the house of Shelty, (for he bethought him that it was far more likely to find his master there than at Captain Singleton's,) and once more spurring his fleet courser, he galloped up to the sign of the Trumpeter, and blowing his whistle, was answered in a squeaking voice from within, which he knew to be that of the old dame,—

“Who’s there, in such a night as this, and what want you?”

“What do you keep folks, drenched with the rain, and starved with the cold, staying at the outside of your door, while they are telling you their business?” cried David, in no very pleasing or gentle accent; “but where’s honest Shelty?—tell him, I am David, come to seek my master, who set out about two hours ago for the Cottage on the Cliff, and is drowned by this time, if he has not taken shelter any where.”

“The Lord preserve us!” answered the old woman, instantly unbarring the door, and bringing a light, “I believe a witch has crossed our threshold to night, that’s for certain, for I am like to hear of nothing but foul mishaps! but come in, lad, and dry thy garments, and warm thee a bit with the faggot, which I have kept burning these two hours for Shelty, and still he does not come; but come, haste thee, lad, bring thy poor beast into the shed, the while you bide here, which I’m thinking won’t be long, when I tell you the sad mishap that has happened at the Cliff. Lord preserve us! that dreadful Cliff has been the grave of thousands!”

“What, is master drowned?” cried David, now jumping off his horse, and following the old woman into the house; and, conceiving that on such a night as this nothing was more probable, he repeated while he almost gasped for breath,—“What, is master drowned? oh, poor Miss Jessy!—poor Miss Olive!—what will become of them?”

“Your master drowned!” cried old Judith, bawling as loud as she was able, in the ear of the terrified David, “no, not quite so bad as that neither, but bad enough; not your master, you silly goose,” perceiving that poor David was already dissolved in tears, “but Captain Singleton is, aye, and twenty more beside, for aught

that I know; for Shelty is gone to hear all about the poor souls. You must know, there is as fine a ship as ever sailed on the salt sea ocean dashed to pieces, right under the Cliff.—Oh! it has been a terrible storm.”

“Well, Judith, but how do you know that my master is not one of the sufferers, as well as the Captain?” cried David, “though I don’t see how the Captain’s life can be endangered by it, unless he went on board, which in such weather was quite impossible.”

To which Judith, impatient of contradiction, replied,—

“I tell you again, boy, that Captain Singleton is dead, and your master is alive! wouldst persuade me out of my senses; did I not hear the voice of Peter Blust, which I have known the sound of these good twenty years, come next Michaelmas; did I not hear him talking with Shelty,—what was to be done with the poor souls that lay stretched on the sea-beach, without sense or motion. You unbelieving oaf, think’st thou, though I be old, that I am deaf and blind too? Come, take a sup’ of brandy, it will warm your heart, as you journey to the Cliff, where belike you are going to hear the sad tale.”

“This moment, mother,” uttered David, “this moment I must depart,” and again mounting his courser, he rode rapidly toward the residence of Captain Singleton; the tempest having greatly subsided, and the sky growing perceptibly clearer, enabled him to proceed with less danger up the steep ascent that led to the cottage, at which were already assembled a multitude of surrounding spectators, most of whom were fishermen and pilots, who had been called in to render assistance, but in vain, every soul had perished in the wreck, but five persons, three of whom had expired almost as soon as they were conveyed on the shore; but it was remarkable that the survivors were two youths, both of whose ages did not appear to number thirty; but whether they were brothers, could not be ascertained in the present weak and languid state in which they lay, when brought into the house of the Captain, as neither of them had spoken a syllable, or was likely to recover the use of their speech for some time. They were both fair complexioned, but there was no other similarity of feature between them. But the fate of Captain Singleton no one could positively tell; though

the dreadful certainty of what had befallen him was probably guessed at; for before the approach of the tempest, at an early hour of noonday, he had gone out in an open boat, as was his usual custom, and no vestige had been seen or heard of him afterward; notwithstanding every search and inquiry that could be made was instantly ventured, that the perilous state of the weather could admit of, by the immediate orders of the fisher, who, on his arrival at the Cliff, beheld the wretched Agatha, laying in the arms of one of the domestics, pale and motionless, and apparently insensible of the passing scene which surrounded her.

It was at this moment that every fibre of the generous fisher's heart bled, at the fatal catastrophe which had so suddenly deprived this young and lovely creature of her only protector: and the recollection, that such might have been the situation of his Jessie, and his Olive, had he perished in the voyages he had so frequently been obliged to make on the rough seas, caused an involuntary flood of tears to gush from his eyes, as he viewed, with the tenderest pity and commiseration, the pale features of the beautiful daughter of the unfortunate Captain: and at this moment, David, who would no longer be denied access to the presence of his master, burst into the apartment in which he was, exclaiming,—

“Well Heaven be praised, my dear master, that you are not dead, after all! You must know, Sir, that you was no sooner gone from Herring Dale, than Miss Jessie and Olive cried ready to break their hearts after you, and though I told them that I knew you were safely housed somewhere, yet they would not be pacified a bit the more; so I mounted Bloodhound, and came off immediately after you, little thinking what had happened at the Captain's; poor soul, he has perished, sure enough! he went out in a cock-boat, when a ship could not outride the storm; and now, master, I wait your orders; shall I go back to Miss Jessie and Miss Olive, and tell them that you are safe and sound?”

“Shiver my topsails! but I am not stout enough to bear away and leave an honest heart to weather the gale, how they can and how they may,” cried the fisher, casting another pitying glance at the poor suffering Agatha. “Jessy and Olive have a father to protect them, this poor girl has not now a friend;—two fine boys



MRS. FLEMING ON HEARING THE LOSS OF HER FATHER.

too want protection as well as she ;—they have been thrown on this coast by Providence, and shiver my top-sails if they shall perish, now that it has pleased Heaven to preserve their lives, while Peter Blust has got a shiner left ! Shiver my top-sails, if I don't take them all to Herring Dale, and be a father to them ! The girls and the boys, I'll have them all, David, for the best of all possible reasons ; because they have got nobody else to care a rope's yarn about them."

"What, master, will you take the whole ship's company ?" cried David ; the two poor shipwrecked boys, this young lady, that old man, who was the Captain's servant, and that old good-looking gentlewoman, who has got Miss in her arms ?—why, master, what will Miss Jessy and Miss Olive say ? and old Alice the housekeeper ?"

"Shiver my top-sails," cried Peter, "I say this,—that if they don't love and cherish these poor sufferers, as much as their father will, in hail or sunshine, that I will turn them out of doors, though they are my own daughters. Ah, but I know they will," added the fisher, after a pause ; and, as if he had felt angry with himself for imagining that they would not, "I know the heart of my Jessy : bless her ! 'tis as tender as a lamb's. She will love this poor girl the more for the misfortune which has happened to her, and will treat her like a sister."

As the fisher was a man of considerable property, he could do all this without in the slightest degree injuring his own family ; and David knew enough of the disposition of his master, to feel well convinced, that what Peter once said, he would never retract from, let the consequence be what it may ; nor did it occasion the least surprise, when he was ordered to return to Herring Dale, to apprise his young mistresses of the intentions of their father, and of the calamity which had taken place at the Cottage on the Cliff. And this arrangement being made much to the satisfaction of the fisher, he sat down by the side of Miss Singleton, and endeavoured to console her as much as possible for the loss she had sustained,—
"As, doubtless, my dear girl," uttered he, "your poor father has perished, there was no chance of his being saved in such a gale as I never witnessed but once in my life, since I was a fisher It

is, as I say, next to impossibility that he could preserve the breath of life in such a storm, and therefore, poor fellow, as we cannot help him, yet we may do something to help you ; in the first place I am a father myself, my dear, you know that I am ; Miss Singleton, I have got two as nice bits of girls as ever man was blessed with, Jessy and Olive ;—and in the next place, I have made a few bright shiners on the salt seas ; or in other words, Miss Singleton, I have been a pains-taking man, and Providence has made me a prosperous one. I have sufficient to provide for my girls, and something to spare for those who have not quite so much : now, having said thus much, I will say a little more, in order, my dear, that we may understand one another. I don't like the thoughts of your living alone in this old cracked water butt on the top of this cliff, as if you were deserted by all the world, when you can come and live along with one who would sooner perish, than see you put upon by any one, or want for any thing ? One who would be proud to receive you, Miss Singleton, as a daughter, and to protect you as such under the roof with his own children : my Jessy and my Olive too, will love you as if you were their sister. This is what I mean to say to you, my dear, and I am now waiting for your answer."

Till this moment the lovely Agatha had not shed one tear ; but the frank proposal made to her by the friendly and benevolent fisher, of such a nature, and under such circumstances, when she despaired of finding a friend in the world, so powerfully affected her feelings, that she sobbed aloud in making her grateful acknowledgments to the fisher, while she timidly exclaimed,—

" Heaven ever bless and eternally reward your generous intentions, Sir, toward a poor helpless orphan maid, who stands so much in need of your friendly services, and will most willingly confide in your friendship, and most gratefully resign herself to your protection ; yet to be a burden on your kindness, when I am not wholly left destitute, would render me unworthy of your good opinion, did I not tell you the means which prevent me from being so. My dear father, some few weeks after we had become residents in this Cottage, gave into my possession, what I could never imagine that he was the master of, a casket of rich jewels, and with these words he placed them in my hands :—

“ ‘ Agatha, you are no longer a child, but know how to appreciate the uses and the value of such gifts as this casket contains ; behold these jewels ! they are not mine, but Agatha’s ;—they belonged to one who desired that, when you had attained the age of seventeen, they should be presented to you ; I have fulfilled *her* request ; you are this day seventeen years of age. But, remember that I also received an injunction with these jewels, to be made known to you at the same time, that if ever misfortune assailed you in the shape of poverty, you were to apply them to your immediate use as the means of relief, but on no other condition are you to part with them.’ ”

“ My father seemed much affected as he pronounced these words, but when I inquired if these jewels had belonged to my mother, he frowned terribly, and sternly bade me ask no questions ; since which I never dared to importune him on the subject. I have closely too examined the jewels, which bear no mark on them saving the letter A, and have no knowledge but that they are now mine, Sir ; as such I offer them to you, as the only security I have to give you in return for so much kindness, while I continue as your guest.”

“ And, shiver my top-sails, if I ever touch one of them ! ” cried the fisher, much struck by the display of such noble ingenuousness, both of principle and feeling, in the character of Agatha, “ or suffer any body to put a finger on them beside yourself. No, no, my pretty one, they are all your own for Peter Blust !—and who knows but a day may yet come, when you may find out who it was that left you such jewels to keep for their sakes. Well, Miss Singleton, as you and I now plainly understand one another, mind, I shall expect you to take up your residence at Herring Dale, as soon as you have settled matters according to your liking at the Cliff ; as to the poor boys, I have taken charge of them also,—the little dogs must have somebody to take care of them ;—I should like to know their names though ! ”

“ And do you not know their names, Sir ? ” demanded Agatha, after a moment’s serious pause ; to which Peter replied,—

“ No, my dear, no, there will be time enough to make those inquiries when the poor little fellows have recovered their strength,

which I fear will not be for a length of time, they have suffered greatly, and are much bruised, and nature was nearly exhausted when they were taken up. Shelly is a warm-hearted soul, and these boys owe him much for the vigorous exertion he has made to save their lives; he tells me that at one moment they were on the point of sinking, being clasped in each others arms so firmly that they could scarcely be separated, even when dragged upon the beach, so that I cannot help thinking there is some relationship between them; and as to the vessel, there is no vestige of her at present,—not a fragment left behind to inform us of her name, or her captain's. The poor scamen who perished after they were driven on the surge, were certainly not Englishmen, from some indistinct sounds which they uttered in the agonies of their expiring moments; but Shelly thinks they were either French or Italians. This however, is mere conjecture, as they had no apparel on, not even a check shirt, poor fellows, when they floated on the surge."

Poor Agatha, unable to contend with the insupportable reflection, that her father had so suffered and so perished, could not listen to this affecting account given by the fisher of the dying seamen, without bursting into a fresh agony of tears, which though it greatly relieved her oppressed heart, exhausted her delicate frame, and rendered repose absolutely necessary for the agitated state of her harrassed spirits; and though Agatha had been taught to know and to feel that the only remedy against the evils and calamities of human life was patience and fortitude, yet for a short time she sunk under the severe and sudden shock which had so unexpectedly assailed her, and respectfully bidding the kind-hearted fisher for a few hours farewell, she retired to her chamber, with her faithful attendaut, and now her only companion, Clari-belle, from whom Peter assured her she should not be separated, nor yet the old man who had acted in the capacity of the Captain's servant, whom he had taken into his service because he had been faithful to his master. It was not that this old man (who was called Paulo) was a personage very pleasing in the eyes of the fisher, for Paulo was cold, distant and reserved to an uncommon degree; he had also a set of features which were harsh and forbidding, and

on which 'mystery' was written in very legible characters, which was the exact opposite of the disposition of the fisher, who hated concealment of every kind, and who, of a frank and generous nature himself, wished (but could not find) every one else to resemble him in this particular. What was remarkable, too, Paulo did not seem to know much of this young lady, though he professed to have been so long in the service of Captain Singleton, nor did he appear very solicitous about her. The untimely death, too, of his unfortunate master was not lamented by him in a way that an old and affectionate servant would have done, for it rather appeared to have increased the natural asperity of his temper, than have called forth any sensibility of his heart.

All this was observed in silence by the fisher, who would have willingly found means to have dispensed with the services of this disagreeable man altogether, had he not delicately considered the situation of Miss Singleton, and the peculiar circumstances in which she was so unfortunately placed; and though he did not like Paulo, nor was over fond of admitting him beneath his roof, yet, out of respect to the feelings of the unhappy Agatha, he forbore to express his sentiments on the subject, well knowing that if Paulo did not behave himself properly in his household, that he could relinquish his services whenever he thought it prudent to dismiss him,—but so recently after the death of the Captain, and without any apparent cause than merely having conceived a prejudice toward him, would appear brutal and unnatural, besides being guilty of great ill-manners toward an object whom he now felt himself bound to protect and to cherish as sacredly as one of his own daughters.

"No, shiver my top-sails, if ever I do a dirty or unmanly action," exclaimed he, as, having taken a kind leave of Agatha, and leaving instructions with Shelty, that the boys should have every attention shown to them, till they were able to be removed to Herring Dale,—“Shiver my top-sails,” again repeated the fisher, as he mounted his white naggie, to return again to his own habitation, after the affecting scenes he had witnessed at the Cottage on the Cliff, “if I hurt the poor girl's feelings, by telling her that I don't like the Captain's servant. There may be men who like to plant

thorns in a helpless woman's breast, where poverty and misfortune have already planted many; they deserve to have a rope's yarn twisted about their necks for it."

These were the reflections of the honest fisher as he journeyed homeward; and longing to behold his daughters, to know in what sort of disposition they had received the intelligence conveyed to them by David, he resisted a temptation, which he was by no means accustomed to do, and that was to stop at the sign of the Trumpeter to taste a drop of Shelt's home-brewed ale, and enliven himself with a pipe of tobacco; but the fisher was, for the first time in his life, even out of sorts with his favourite propensity.

The fate of Captain Singleton, and the sufferings of his lovely daughter, had given a serious turn to his thoughts, and while he heaved a sigh too for the unfortunate crew who had perished at the Cliff, David, and even Jessy and Olive came out of the gateway to meet him, and to welcome his return home again; even old Alice came hobbling after them, with tears of joy trickling down her furrowed cheeks, while she blubbered out,—

"Heaven save you, dear master! God be thanked, you are returned once more in safety to your own peaceful home."

"Thank ye, Alice, thank ye, old girl; dost believe thou art a warm and true-hearted wench, for all thou art whiles a bit snapped or so; come, hobble in, and get ready some supper, and heat a drop of brandy, for I am very queer; shiver my top-sails, if I don't find my eyes swimming, after all! for the last time I beheld the Captain, he went across that meadow, when the beans were in blossom, I remember, with that angel of a daughter of his hanging on his arm;—poor fellow! he will smell the bean-flower blossom no more! but——(here the fisher caught a glance at Jessy; for Olive, for some reason or other, had at that moment averted her head, but Jessy's eyes overflowed with tears)—what is the matter, my Jessy?" cried the fisher, giving her a hearty smack of her ruby lips, at the same moment that he turned toward Olive and saluted her in the same affectionate manner; after which they all went into the house, where a more explicit explanation took place between them, relative to the situation of Agatha, and the fate of her unfortunate parent. The fisher concluding his account

of the unhappy sufferers with hoping that they were prepared to receive Miss Singleton under his roof, with every mark of attention and kindness that her misfortunes entitled her to expect, and intreating them that they would show her the affection of a sister; for remember girls," continued the fisher, regarding his daughters with peculiar earnestness, "that such might have been your own condition, had it pleased Providence to have made you orphans, like Agatha. I have often been in danger of perishing at sea, in which case you would both have been fatherless, and in want of some friendly hand to have protected your helpless youth; reflect on this, and when you behold the orphan daughter of Captain Singleton enter this roof, study to promote her happiness by every means in your power, and make it a comfortable home to her."

CHAPTER IV.

"There's rue for you, and here's some for me.—I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my poor father died."

THE grief of Agatha Singleton, unlike that of some of our modern females, might have been taken for a want of sensibility, rather than an excess of it; but it could only be by those who were unacquainted with the tenour of her harmless life, and the natural bent of her heroic disposition; for the mind of Agatha, as well as her principles, and even her manners, were those of a heroine. Tempered by misfortune, although only in the earliest bloom of youth, she had acquired what few young persons possess—calm philosophy and patient mildness; she could, therefore, endure much, without giving vent to her feelings, which, however, were quick, sensitive, and delicately acute; yet no one knew so well to conceal the anguish of her throbbing heart, or was so prompt to forgive an injury offered to her feelings: which, though she did not seem to resent, never failed to sink deep into the recesses of her wounded heart, and occasioned her to mourn in silence, though she never murmured at the unkindness of her fellow-creatures;

for seldom did Agatha shed a tear, but in the presence of that being alone, who knew from whence it derived its source. Educated in a convent, she had imbibed her first principles of religion, which, so far from having rendered her mind gloomy, austere, or melancholy, had taught her that cheerful and rational pleasure was the only basis on which a true sense of christianity was formed, and that an All-wise and Merciful Being does not forbid us to partake of those many and manifold blessings which he has so kindly provided for our use ; he had made them in vain, if his creatures were not to enjoy them. No ; Agatha had learned that it is only when we pervert his good and gracious gifts, that we render ourselves then unworthy of possessing them. And, What has innocence to do with fear ? was, perhaps, the first lesson which was impressed on the mind and the heart of the youthful novice, in the Convent of the Holy Sisters. She had neither taken the veil, nor was adjured to do so by the guardians who had placed her there ; and was, consequently, unbiassed in her moral principles and religious duties, by the austere and rigid laws of the convent, or the sentiments of those who had already embraced a monastic life ; for, before this young and lovely female had so deeply drank of the cup of sorrow, she had been lively as the bounding doe, though harmless and as gentle as the innocent dove. But the elastic spirit which health, fresh glowing in the first dawn of rosy beauty, had given to her blooming cheek, had suddenly received a check, and that the rose was pulled, though time had not withered up its charms, was evident, from the languor which too often pervaded almost every feature of a countenance which, whether it expressed mirth or melancholy, was always beautiful.

The unexpected shock which the feelings of Agatha now sustained, was, indeed, so agonizing as to render every nerve powerless, by the sudden whirlwind of calamity which had overtaken her. When she thought of being perfectly secure, and ultimately safe from every evil, the death of her only earthly protector, (for so Agatha had been taught to believe that Captain Singleton really was,) had torn every fibre of her gentle heart asunder ; and no sooner had the worthy fisher departed from the cottage, than she wept abundantly, and beheld herself in the situation that she ac-

tually was—an orphan; not, indeed, entirely destitute of protection, or without the means of supplying her present wants, but was it the protection of a father? or were those the means to which she had been accustomed? No, surely not: yet still it was protection, and still those means were left; for she could not doubt of the honourable intentions of the benevolent fisher towards her; and the valuable jewels which were still in her possession, and which she was at full liberty to part with whenever she found such an expedient necessary, would always enable her to repay the obligation she should incur under the roof of Peter Blust; and this thought was so consoling to Agatha, even in the present state of her most anguished feelings, that she endeavoured to moderate the excess of her grief; and perceiving the anxiety which was depicted in the countenance of her faithful Claribelle, who was hanging over her in silent, but tender and respectful sorrow, she exclaimed,—

“I will weep no more, Claribelle; 'tis ungrateful to murmur at Providence, while it yet leaves the means of consolation in our power. Alas! could tears recal my poor father, I had shed enough in the ocean, where he has found a watery grave; but well do I know that ocean will not give up its dead, nor will heaven restore what it has taken away.”

To which Claribelle, rejoiced to perceive in the countenance of her young and lovely mistress an expression of composure and resignation, which from the nature of her misfortune, she had not expected would so soon have taken place, replied,—

“And you think rightly, my dear young lady; may Heaven, which has afflicted you so deeply, still give you fortitude to bear the loss you have sustained, which, it is very true, that all the tears you have shed will not bring back to you again. Mysterious, indeed, are the ways of Providence, but when were they ever unjust or unwise? Had your father still been permitted to have remained a sojourner in this world's earthly space, greater calamities might have befallen both him and you. Be comforted, therefore, dear Miss Agatha; for while you are good and innocent, you will never have much cause to mourn.”

“It is true, Claribelle,” answered Agatha, “that I have heard

only the wicked can be really miserable ; but are they not, therefore, doubly to be commiserated, whose state is such, that no consolation can be given to their sufferings ?”

“ Yet still there is consolation, madam,” cried Claribelle, “ even to the unworthy, if they are penitent. Repentance must surely be atonement, when it is breathed from a broken, humble spirit, and a contrite heart.”

At these words Agatha, assisted by Claribelle, arose from the couch which she had washed with her tears, while she continued at intervals to address her attendant, in terms that proved how firmly she relied on the further protection of that Providence which had not yet wholly deserted her.

“ I have always been taught the necessity of exertion, Claribelle,” uttered she, as she bound up the clustering locks of dark brown hair, which had fallen in negligence over her transparent neck, in the first moments of her violent and heart-felt grief, “ I have always been obliged to exert the faculties of my senses, and I now learn how necessary it is to practise it, blessed be the convent of the Holy Sisters ! had I never entered that sanctuary, I had not known how to temper misfortune with patience and philosophy.”

“ Say, rather, with fortitude, my dear Miss Agatha,” cried Claribelle, half smiling, “ and leave philosophy out of the question ; it is too cold, too rigid a term for one so young, so beautiful, as you are ; and Heaven grant that you may never have occasion to feel that it is such ! yet why do I fear ? you have more good sense and prudence than any young female I ever beheld, and may that be your talisman in the hour of temptation !”

“ Temptation !” uttered Agatha, not perfectly understanding the meaning which was applied by Claribelle, “ what can so wretched a being as I am, Claribelle, have to do with temptation ? if, indeed you mean the temptation of vanity or ambition, I have none, but to do good, and to think myself unworthy still of the blessings that I share. I never did evil that I know of, nor ever will, if I can avoid it.”

“ Then you must avoid the temptation, my dear young lady,” still gravely repeated Claribelle, “ for the temptation which I

mean too frequently assails us in the shape of good, and by that we are deceived."

Some refreshment was now offered to Agatha by the hand of Claribelle, which she partook of much to the satisfaction of her companion, after which the most anxious inquiries were made respecting the health of the two young invalids, the poor shipwrecked boys; and Shelty, who was left in charge of them by the honest fisher, was instantly summonsed into the presence of Miss Singleton to give an account of them, and who replied to her inquiry of,—“Good Sir, how are the poor boys?” in the following manner:—

“By my faith, lady, there is one of them as stout and as strong as Hercules, and the other has no more life in him than a muscle; yet he is the prettiest fellow of the two for all that, and, I will be sworn, comes of noble parentage, for he has the air of a quality gentleman; but the other is as surly and unlicked a cub as ever you beheld! he has no more manners than a bear, with all the mischievous tricks of a monkey.”

“You do not believe then, Mr. Shelty, that these boys are brothers?” cried Agatha: to which he answered,—

“Brothers! not they indeed, my lady; I might as well suppose that a herring and a lobster inhabited one shell.”

“And do they give no account of themselves?” rejoined Agatha, “do they not know the names of their parents, nor the country from whence they came?”

“I have asked them that question full twenty times,” answered Shelty, “and I understand, from the little smooth-faced gentleman, that his name is Alfred; that the name of the ship that is wrecked was Alfred; that she came from the coast of Denmark: and, what is still more extraordinary, that the name of his father was also Alfred, who was, he believes, the owner of the ship they sailed in, for they called him ‘the captain;’ and that when the vessel struck on the cliff he beheld his father plunge in the sea, from which time he had seen him no more, so believes him to be one of the sufferers that perished. ‘But pray, Sir,’ cried I, ‘who is your companion? what is his name, and the name of his parents?’ now, my lady, I was much struck by the young gentleman’s very sensible reply; for he answered,—

“ ‘ You ask me what I do not know myself, and therefore cannot tell you, for we were not together in my father’s ship, he slept above, and I slept below in the cabin ; I don’t believe that he had any body belonging to him in the ship, because he used to eat bits of meat that were given to him ; nobody seemed to care about him, but indeed, indeed, I love him, for one thing.’ ”

“ ‘ And what is that,’ cried I, ‘ since you are not acquainted even with his name ?’ ”

“ ‘ No matter for that,’ answered the little fellow, ‘ I know he has a kind heart, and tried to save me when we fell in the sea together, and I must love him for that as long as I live.’ ”

“ ‘ And it is very likely that he endeavoured to save you from being drowned,’ uttered I, ‘ for you were clasped in each other’s arms when you were thrown on the beach.’ ”

“ ‘ Yes, he held me fast round the neck,’ cried the boy, ‘ with all the strength that he had, for I grew very faint, and very sick, and should have quite sunk down, if he had not held me. Where is he ? pray let him come to the bedside, Sir, if you please, that I may kiss him, because he was so good-natured.’ ”

“ On this, Dreadnot, as I call him, approached, and had you seen the two boys embrace one another, my dear young lady, you would never have forgotten it ; for my part, the tears rolled down my cheeks like hail-stones on an April morning. I then began to examine the other, and when I asked him his name he gruffly replied,—

“ ‘ What do you want to know my name for ? I got whipped once for telling my name to a stranger, and belike you are going to do the same kind thing by me ?’ ”

“ To which I answered,—

“ ‘ But you must tell your name to him who is going to take care of you, he is your preserver, and you owe him gratitude, you would have perished else.’ ”

“ The urchin now fixed his large full blue eyes upon me, my lady, and somewhat contemptuously replied,—

“ ‘ He my preserver ! *God is my preserver*, I do not thank any one else.’ And he has remained silent and sulky ever since, to all the questions I have put to him relative to his connexions ; taking

no notice of any one but his fellow-sufferer, and devouring his meals as if he had hungered for a twelvemonth ; but I warrant me, master Blust will bring him to his bearings shortly, the surly little monkey will soon be taught on what side his bread is buttered, when he goes to live at the Dale.

" But in the meantime I hope you will have patience with him, Mr. Shelty," cried Agatha, greatly astonished at the extraordinary recital which Shelty had given of the manners of the little stranger, whom she felt some anxiety to behold, and converse with, when her mind was more tranquil than at the present crisis of affairs ; and again she repeated with her accustomed sweetness and gentleness of manner,—

" You will bear yet a little while with the temper of this wayward boy, Mr. Shelty, for who knows but he has had bad usage, rough treatment will go nigh to make rough manners, Mr. Shelty."

Whether it was the voice of Agatha, or the peculiar cast of her beautiful features when she uttered these words, that attracted the attention of Shelty toward her, we know not : but certain it is, that he rivetted his eyes on her as one who had suddenly excited some powerful and involuntary emotion of deep interest, which it was possible was not unmixed with a compassionate concern for the untimely fate of her unfortunate father, and the orphan state of his young and lovely daughter, for in a voice much more softened than that in which he had first addressed her, he exclaimed,—

" And can you, my sweet young lady, regard the feelings of others so anxiously and kindly, when you yourself are so heavily afflicted with misfortune ?"

To which Agatha replied,

" Yes, Shelty, and that is one reason why I should regard the feelings of others, because my own misfortunes remind me of their's ; and although I am thankful that I am not alone unhappy and unfortunate in this wide world, yet this thought does not make me feel the less sensibly for the sufferings of my fellow-creatures ; I do not rejoice but mourn at the catalogue of calamities with which human nature is filled. The situation of these poor boys is certainly to be far more compassionated even than mine, because they are not arrived to an age of maturity, to consider or reflect on the

nature of their misfortune, I have been taught the lesson of adversity, they have it yet to learn."

"Why, faith, my lady," cried Shelty, smiling, "I do not think that little surly chops will mind rough weather or smooth, so long as he has plenty of victuals to eat; he seems to have been used to pretty hard fare, and is not very nice or dainty about what you give him, I never behold such a little wolf in my born days; but do not fear, my lady, that I will cross or anger him, while he is under the care of Shelty he shall have plenty, I promise you; but would you could see the difference that is between him and the other sweet young gentleman; poor little fellow, he will scarcely swallow a mouthful of food, or touch a chop of the nourishing things which Mr. Blust's housekeeper has sent up from the Dale for him, though I dare say that Miss Jessy has had a hand in the looking of them up so daintily; bless her little heart, there is not her fellow in all the country round for trying to make folks happy and merry, like herself! she is as tender as a chicken, as fresh as a rose, and as beautiful as a May-day morning: she never frowns, not she, blow high, blow low, raining or shining, Miss Jessy Blust is always in good-humour, so that you must know, Miss Singleton, that she is the favourite of all the lads and lassies in our town."

"Nor do I at all wonder at it," cried Agatha, by no means averse to listen to the praise of the sweet Jessy, for whom she herself felt the strongest predilection; "since nothing can be more agreeable or charm us so greatly as good temper, Mr. Shelty, it is one of the most beautiful features in the disposition of either man or woman, and there is nothing really beautiful without it."

Agatha paused, she was just on the point of making an inquiry of honest Shelty, who seemed so perfectly acquainted with the fisher's family, and that inquiry was respecting the eldest daughter of Mr. Blust, Olive, whom she had only once seen, but her natural prudence repressed her curiosity, for she felt that she had no right to do so, and that it was not delicate or proper to ask questions of almost an entire stranger, about the disposition of a family, under whose roof she was so shortly going to be received, on terms of confidence and sisterly friendship.

Now whether Shelty guessed at the thoughts of Miss Singleton,

from the expression of her countenance, we cannot pretend to define, but it is certain, from the expression of his, which was a tolerable blunt one, that he intended to say something more on the subject, for having twirled his finger and thumbs about for five minutes together, he exclaimed,—

“ So it is, miss, a good temper is a beautiful thing, it is better in a woman’s face than the finest complexion in the world, though she had the colour of a lily or a rose. Now there is Miss Olive Blust,—but perhaps you have seen our good fisher’s eldest daughter, Miss Singleton ?”

Agatha replied that she had, and another pause ensued.

At length Shelly, determined to say all that he intended, yet doubtful in what light it might be received, began with,—

“ Well, miss, and what do you think of her, she is not at all like Miss Jessy, is she ?”

“ She certainly bears but little resemblance to her sister in person or in feature, if you mean that,” answered Agatha.

To which Shelly bluntly replied, “ why yes, miss, that is something like what I meant, but not quite my meaning after all.”

Agatha remained profoundly silent to this observation ; not so honest Shelly, for he presently added in a sort of whisper, as if not willing that it should reach the ear of any other person,—

“ No, miss, I was going to say, though I have taken some time to consider whether I should say it or not, that when you go to live at the Dale, you will find Miss Olive and Miss Jessy Blust two very different persons ; in one word, Miss Singleton, I wish to put such a sweet-tempered and beautiful young lady as you are on your guard.” Here Shelly stopped to take a little breath, and to see what effect this speech had produced on the feelings of Agatha, who in a calm and placid tone quietly replied,—

“ On my guard, Mr. Shelly, in the house of your friend and patron, and under the roof of the hospitable and benevolent fisher, who has offered an asylum to an unhappy orphan in the bosom of his respectable family ; you bid me to be on my guard—against what—against whom ?”

“ The eldest daughter of Fisher Blust,” answered Shelly, in a firm and decided tone ; for though she is as beautiful as her sister,

she is not so good nor so harmless, she is suspicious of every body, be they ever so faultless, and if you were as innocent as an angel, she will suspect you."

"Suspect me, Sir!" cried Agatha, indignant now for the first moment since her misfortune, and highly displeased with the terror of the discourse that Shelty had been addressing to her, unauthorized, and unwarranted; she added with warmth, though tempered with mildness,—“of what, Sir, is Agatha Singleton to be suspected? and by what right do you breathe such an insinuation into my ear, against the daughter of one whom you well know has offered me a protecting asylum beneath his roof, and with whom, it appears you yourself are on terms of the most familiar intimacy? what is your motive, Mr. Shelty, for addressing me in this extraordinary manner? unless, indeed, it affords you a satisfaction to render the wretched still more so, by reminding an unfortunate child that she has lost the only friend who could have protected her without censure."

"Me remind you of your unfortunate loss, and make you more wretched than what you are, Miss Singleton!" cried Shelty wounded to the heart by reproaches he neither expected nor deserved, "may I perish this moment, if I intended to do either, or that I did not wish to serve you!"

"You surely cannot do that while you give me unfavourable impressions of the character of my friends;" rejoined Agatha, "and whatever be your intentions, and you know best what they are, I will not again listen to such reports as you have given of Miss Olive Blust, whom I do not know, but when I do I will judge for myself, and abide by the consequences."

"You may do that and welcome;" now gruffly replied Shelty, "and since, miss, you are so much offended with those who mean you only good, I bid you beware of those who may not deal with you quite so fairly, though they may have smoother tongues to recommend them to your notice; but farewell, miss, and may peace and happiness dwell with you, and your innocence and beauty find you many friends! I had no interest, Miss Singleton, in the caution I have given you;—no interest but that every honest man will take, when he sees a lovely young woman like you on

the brink of a thorny precipice, and bids her to take care of it; this was my meaning, I had no other, so Heaven help me! God bless you, miss! you may despise poor Shelly, but——”

Shelly was advancing towards the door, one foot upon the threshold, and the other in Agatha's apartment; he had spoken to her heart with resistless force, and she doubted no longer the motive which had induced him to act thus openly, and independently of the prejudice which she might conceive against him for so doing; and Agatha now felt that she was bound in gratitude to thank him, for troubling himself at all on her account; in a voice, therefore, of the most melodious sweetness, she exclaimed,—

“Despise you, Mr. Shelly! no, I beg you will never entertain such a thought; it is not in my nature to despise any one, much less you, who are desirous of doing me service,—and you have my thanks most sincerely, for your kind wishes towards me; I will remember your caution too—yes, I will think of your words, Shelly.”

“Will you indeed, my dear miss, remember poor Shelly?” cried the poor fellow, heartily glad to find that he had at last made some impression on her, “and that you will make me your friend, whenever you shall require assistance?” uttered he; “will you make me that promise dear young lady, ere I depart from your presence?”

“Assuredly I will, Shelly,” cried Agatha, “and Heaven knows how soon I may stand in need of your protection! farewell, honest Shelly!”

Shelly instantly departed to look after, and attend, to the wants of his young charges, leaving the mind of Agatha greatly disturbed by the displeasing communications he had given her respecting the character of Miss Olive Blust, and almost in doubt whether she should yet finally determine on quitting her present habitation at the Cottage on the Cliff, which was her paternal home, of which she was now the sole possessor, and no one could deprive her of; however scanty the means by which she might subsist, still she would be left the mistress of her actions and her occupations, and avoid the observation and ill-natured reflections, to which she would be exposed in the house of the fisher.

And was this the return for the generous proposal made by this benevolent man, after the promise she had given him to accept of his friendship and protection? thus coldly to tell him she had changed her mind, without assigning any particular reason for remaining in the Cottage? and could she betray the confidence of honest Shelty, by stating the real motive she had for rejecting his service? certainly not: what had passed between her and Shelty must be inviolable, or she were unworthy of any confidence at all; and, thus resolved, Agatha once more endeavoured to compose her fluttered spirits, and to resign herself wholly to the destination of that Power who know better how to arrange the future prospects, than any earthly monitor or friend.

Agatha had not yet summoned to her aid sufficient fortitude to explore the chamber which had been occupied by her deceased father, but she found that she must, however painful to her feelings, or agonizing to her recollection, soon attend to this most necessary duty; as she did not know what papers or books might be laying loosely about in the apartment, in which he had been engaged for many successive hours on the day preceding that on which the fatal catastrophe had happened, and they might be of ultimate consequence; or if they were not, she did not choose to have them fall into the hands of strangers, provided that the Cottage should be let while she remained the guest of Mr. Blust, who had intimated that such an arrangement would be advantageous to her, in the present prospect of her affairs, as the rent of this house would be coming in for her use, while she herself would be incurring no expense at all. In short, there was nothing that could be thought of either for her comfort or convenience, that this worthy and kind-hearted man had not suggested; and Agatha felt how ungrateful she would appear, by rejecting his offer of friendship at the present moment, when real and disinterested friendship was a jewel so rare to be found in man toward woman.

"You must accompany me, Claribelle, whither I am this instant going," uttered she; "if I venture there alone it is very probable that my courage will fail me, even at the very moment that I shall most require it."

"Where, my dear young lady?" cried Claribelle, perceiving

that at this moment the eyes of Agatha were filled with tears, and that her delicate frame nearly sunk under the conflict of her feelings, "I am ready to follow you wheresoever you command, and I can probably guess where you are now going; but are you quite prepared, my dear young lady, to encounter so distressing a scene?"

"Do you not know, Claribelle," uttered Agatha, "that this cottage will shortly be inspected by strangers, and that in the mean time I must possess myself of any papers which may have belonged to my dear father? his books, and wardrobe too, alas! how shall I be able to look on them, when the beloved possessor of them is no more? You have the key of the chambers, have you not, Claribelle? I desired you to keep it till I should be able to go there myself; you have kept the chambers locked and fastened since——"

The word since lingered on the tongue of the trembling Agatha; she paused—to which Claribelle quickly replied, and guessing at her meaning, "I have obeyed strictly every direction you gave me, my dear young lady; no one has entered there since I turned the key;—yet, stay, let me recollect myself—yes, Paulo was there for a few moments;—no living soul else, I assure you.

A more deadly paleness than usual now overspread the countenance of the beautiful Agatha, and in accents yet more tremulous, she exclaimed,—

"Paulo *there*! Paulo in the apartment of my father! what business had he there? how durst he go there without my permission?"

"My dear young lady, why are you thus alarmed, and what is it that so suddenly agitates you?" inquired Claribelle, surprised at the increased disorder of her young mistress. To which Agatha replied,—

"You are right; I am both alarmed and agitated, since you have informed me that Paulo has been in the chamber of my father, but the cause I must not tell you, Claribelle; yet, tell me, how long did he remain there! did he look surprised when he came out? was there any extraordinary expression on his countenance?"

"Not that I know of," answered Claribelle, far more surprised herself at the earnest and singular inquiries of her young mistress,

yet willing to relieve her mind of any groundless apprehensions she had formed of the integrity of Paulo, she added, "but you know, my dear young lady, that Paulo is honest, and that my master always considered him trust-worthy;—he would not surely touch——"

"The papers that belonged to——" instantly replied Agatha, "Heaven forbid! for who can tell what my father has written? alas, Claribelle! there was a dreadful secret lodged in the bosom of my poor father! the cause alone of the nervous malady which possessed, at times, the whole of his imagination; it disturbed his mind—it haunted his pillow! it was a thorn in his path—it was a serpent in his bed—the destroyer of his peace! and how do I know, but that it is now his grave?"

"Where it has ceased to torment him doubtless, my dear young lady," cried Claribelle, "but pray repress these fears; for, in the supposition that my master had made any written disclosure of his affairs, Paulo would never have had sufficient time to have perused it, for I do not think that he was five minutes in the chamber."

"I will this moment be satisfied; repeated Agatha, "I will examine, carefully examine, every thing that my father has left behind; come, Claribelle, lead me to his chamber."

"I would you could think of some other opportunity;" cried the now almost trembling attendant, "but since you will not be persuaded, dear Miss Agatha, I will accompany you."

There was now no pretext that Claribelle could think of to deter her young mistress from entering the deserted chamber of her deceased father, and slowly they ascended the flight of steps which led to the apartment of Captain Singleton. Claribelle had thought it necessary to provide herself with a lamp; for they had first to go through a dark and winding passage, so solitary and gloomy, that had it been even daylight, they would not have been able to see their way to the end of it, from the total darkness which always pervaded this remote part of the Cottage, which, as report said, was certainly haunted; but the singular habit and melancholy disposition of the Captain, so far from having deterred him from inhabiting these chambers, had actually made them his most favourite retreat, and they were exclusively appropriated to his use,

no other part of his family having had the courage to sleep there but himself; sometimes, indeed, Agatha, who possessed no fears of the supernatural kind, had visited them with her father; but she saw in them nothing either terrific or remarkable, and treated the idle reports she had heard about them with indifference, if not with contempt. Not so, Claribelle; she always trembled whenever these gossips' tales were related by any of the inhabitants of Cromer, and, though she dared not repeat them in the presence of her master, or whisper them in the ear of her young mistress, yet they never failed to impress on her memory a sensation of fear and apprehension, hence accounted for the tremulous motion which pervaded every limb, as they gradually approached the so-much-dreaded apartment of the Captain; to increase which the shades of night were perceptibly drawing on, and the howling of the wind, (for the weather was still unsettled and stormy,) altogether combined to render this place the object of terror and dread to the already alarmed and fearful Claribelle; which, Agatha perceiving, gently reproved her for indulging in such weakness.

"What on earth alarms you thus, Claribelle?" cried she, as they had almost reached the Captain's door, "what have you to fear? if the living cannot harm you, the silent dead can offer you no injury; be more confident in the goodness and protection of that Power, which you well know is superior to *all*!"

"That is very true, miss; I know that," answered the more trembling Claribelle, "but—oh, Miss Agatha!—*there*! did you see no light *there*? *there*, miss just where you are now looking?"

"Where, you silly creature?" cried Agatha, now really angry with her foolish fears, "I see no light but that which proceeds from the lamp which you carry in your hand; but, come, let us have no more of this ridiculous folly; I have thoughts to bestow on more serious things:—where is the key of my father's chamber? give it to me, and be careful that the lamp does not go out."

Thus commanded by the imperative orders of her young mistress, and encouraged by her fearless look and manner, Claribelle instantly delivered up the key of the Captain's chamber to Aga-

tha ; glad to get it out of her possession, but contriving at the same moment, that Agatha should precede her when the key was applied to unfasten the door, which was presently done, Agatha exclaiming, " Now follow me, Claribelle ! "

The attendant obeyed, after shutting her eyes and shrinking behind the back of Agatha, as if to shield her from the sight of any thing that might suddenly appear, so that some minutes elapsed before Claribelle perceived the disorder and agitation which shook even now the trembling frame of her young lady. For what was the silent and speechless grief, and wonder and astonishment, of the almost broken-hearted daughter, to discover no vestige remaining in the apartment, save alone the bed and furniture, of what had belonged to her father. He had four chests, and other valuable articles, all of which had been removed, it was impossible to guess how, when, or whither : the bookcase, which had contained a spacious library, and the drawers, in which his clothes had been deposited, were also quite empty ; and nothing remained to prove that such property had once belonged to, or been in the possession of, Captain Singleton, and the first sentence that escaped from the lips of the distracted Agatha, was,—

" I have been robbed, Claribelle, basely and cruelly plundered of my father's property ; yes, I have been made the dupe of some artful, designing villain ! behold, Claribelle, the chests !—the library !—all—all have been taken away ! but how, or by whom, the Power above only knows ! Alas ! and was this stroke wanting to complete the misfortunes of a poor unhappy orphan ?—yes,—" repeated Agatha, clasping her hands with firmness, and directing her tearful eyes with a look upwards, " Yes, perhaps it was ! and I will yet bear it with patience, without a murmur ! "

But the agonizing grief, and the deep and heartfelt concern which the astonished Claribelle now felt for her beloved young mistress, had possessed every faculty, and had rendered her almost incapable of uttering a word to console her ; when she could speak, however, she burst out into the most passionate exclamation of,—

" Now may Heaven send a vengeance the most awful, terrible and just, on the head of the monster who has done this ! My

sweetest, dearest, best young lady, how shall I comfort you? yet why do you linger here? we can do no good now, you know, in this horrid place, and the sooner we remove from it the better; not that I shall be afraid of haunted spirits again, Miss Agatha, for, as you say, it is not the dead, but the living that harm us. Come, my dear young lady, look not thus wildly and distractedly, but let us instantly go in search of justice."

"Justice!" repeated Agatha, as she slowly arose to follow the very fast retreating steps of Claribelle, who had gladly made her way toward the door, "justice, Claribelle, where shall we find it? I have no means, no power to seek it. Men have been deaf, have been blind to justice. I know not who has done this dark deed, and if I did, I cannot prove it,—yet, Paulo,—the dark, silent and mysterious Paulo——"

"Is the perfidious villain who has robbed you of my master's property," answered Claribelle; and returned with the unhappy Agatha back to her apartment

CHAPTER V.

"———Most ungrateful maid!
 Have you conspir'd, have you with these contriv'd
 To bait me with this foul derision?
 Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd,
 The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,
 When we have chid the hasty-footed time
 For parting us; O, and is all forgot?
 All school days' friendship, childhood innocence."

No sooner had Miss Singleton and her attendant quitted the deserted chamber which was now indeed the scene of rapine as well as of gloom and terror, than the former, again seated in her own apartment, began to recal her scattered thoughts together, and to assume a composure which she did not feel, well knowing that exertion was doubly necessary at this critical moment of her affairs; and the unhappy orphan beheld no safety now, but in the

house of the fisher, from further depredations being committed on the little property which still remained, as she hoped, secure from the hands of the rapacious monster who had so basely plundered her. But *who was he?* she had thought of Paulo, but was willing to banish this thought from her imagination as speedily as it had entered there, were it only on the score of Christianity, for could the confidential servant of her father act thus treacherously by a master who had always treated him with kindness, could Paulo be that monster, who had put the finishing stroke to her misfortunes by an act of the greatest atrocity and cruelty at such a period of her sufferings, ere the body of her poor father had scarcely fallen a victim to the angry elements; the treasures of his master were not so great that he should seek to purloin his poor effects, which would add but little to his ambition, while it would certainly seal his own infamy, both here and hereafter, for the commission of so foul a crime; yet who but Paulo could have access to these apartments, who but Paulo knew that he possessed such effects, and who but Paulo could have contrived it, yet how, when, or by what means, the perplexed Agatha could not guess, unless by false keys some one had gained admission into the apartment, and if Paulo had really not been accessory to the deed, why having been in the chamber, which by Claribelle's own confession he had, though only for the space of a few minutes, why had he not, discovering the robbery, informed her of the transaction; had he eyes, he could not have remained ignorant of it, yet accusation, if not well founded, was a dreadful thing, and Agatha paused on what manner she should proceed, determining on sending for the Fisher Blust before she disclosed the affair to any one; but neither so silent or composed were the feelings of the enraged Claribelle, who had employed the whole of her time since they quitted the chamber in bestowing the loudest invectives against Paulo, and although mildly rebuked by her young mistress, she still continued to execrate him as the most perfidious monster in existence. At length Agatha exclaimed,—

“Hush, Claribelle, be silent, I charge you, I would not, for the world, breathe a sentence that might——” Agatha paused——

"That might what, miss?" cried the impatient attendant.

"Injure a mortal," replied Agatha, "without I felt convinced that they were actually guilty of the crime," and relapsed again into the most thoughtful silence.

"Well, miss," cried Claribelle, "you may do just as you please, and hold your tongue too if you please, but you cannot make me hold mine, if I was to die for it, so I will go this moment, and see if Paulo is to be found; I have not seen him since he brought in the supper last night, I will take my oath of it; and if he is missing, I think but little doubt remains of his being the plunderer."

"But be cautious of whom you make inquiries respecting him," cried Agatha, "till I have conversed with Fisher Blast on the subject; he promised to return to the Cottage again shortly, but, in the mean time, I think we had better despatch a messenger to Herring Dale, to request that he will set out as soon as possible for the Cottage on the Cliff, in which, you see, Claribelle, there is no longer safety nor protection for us. Should I remain here, I may again be exposed to danger, and even to rapine; all I possess in the world may be taken from me through treacherous and unworthy means."

"To be sure, miss, they may;" cried Claribelle, "I protest I shall not be able to close my eyes in this frightful, lonesome place, again! I would not live in it, to be made queen of England!"

"And I should not wonder if the queen of England had not slept in more remote and solitary places, even than this;" replied Agatha, heaving a pensive sigh to the memory of this illustrious, and still lamented and unfortunate lady, "but go, Claribelle, and return as soon as possible with your intelligence; inquire if Paulo is absent, and if not, summons him to my presence, as I would speak to him immediately."

"And pray, miss, of whom am I to make this inquiry but Shelly?" answered Claribelle, "there is no living soul, you know, but him, and us, and the little shipwrecked boys, in the Cottage, and I vow and protest I don't care how soon we get out of it with a whole skin; besides, who can you trust to go with a message to Herring Dale, but him?"

"No one else, now I think of it;" cried Agatha, "bid Shelty to come hither, therefore, Claribelle, and in his absence we will look to the boys."

Away posted Claribelle to the chamber in which honest Shelty was engaged with his young charges, who were seated at a table, enjoying their evening meal with Shelty, who immediately arose at her entrance, and so did one of the boys, while the other continued eating very heartily, without seeming to notice her in any other way than a rude, unmeaning, fixed stare.

"Wont you be pleased to sit down, Mrs. Claribelle?" cried Shelty, offering her a chair, "have you any urgent business, that you break in upon me so suddenly? or does your sweet young lady imagine that we are keeping too late hours in her habitation? I would, indeed, have retired long ago, but my young masters here wanted to stretch their limbs a bit; so I have been taking a walk with them on the Cliff, and about the sea-side, to try if we could not get a sight of something that might have floated from the wreck, but deuce a thing we could see or hear of; so, as it was getting dark, we have trotted back again to our old quarters: but what is the matter, Mistress Claribelle? you look fluttered." To which Claribelle replied,—

"Why, truly, I was thinking what had become of Paulo, and so is my young lady, for since yestereve we have not beheld him: have you seen aught of him, Mr. Shelty?"

"No, truly have not I, Mistress Claribelle," answered Shelty, "he was not a man I liked much to hold any converse with, so we were shy of one another; for the self-same motive, perhaps, he did not like me."

"Then it is too true, and Paulo is a villain!—a base treacherous, perfidious villain!" exclaimed Claribelle, staring wildly, and forgetting at this moment all but the injustice done to her young mistress; "but go if you please, this very moment, to my young lady, she has something to say to you, Mr. Shelty, very particular; go now, that's a good soul;—stay not a moment—she must see you instantly! and, in the mean time, I will attend to the young gentlemen!"

"We don't want you to attend to us; gruffly cried the boy who

was still sitting at the table, and did not yet appear to have quite finished his meal, "Alfred don't want you, and I am sure I don't."

"But let the gentlewoman stay, if she pleases, for all that;" answered his companion, much displeased with the rudeness of the surly little bear; while Claribelle, who could have laughed at any other time at the singularity of this boy, was now in too much anxiety and impatience to regard what he had uttered; but, pushing Shelly off, sat herself down in the chair he had quitted, but without entering into any discourse with the boys; and, when a quarter of an hour had elapsed, Shelly returned, pale and almost breathless, and bidding the boys both of them good night, told them to go to bed, as they had sat up much beyond their usual hour, and must be sleepy; at the same instant that he motioned Claribelle to return with him to her mistress. The boys were soon undressed, and Shelly barred and fastened the door of their chamber, apparently with more precaution than he had yet done; after which, he speeded with Claribelle to the apartment of Miss Singleton, while, arming himself with a great cutlass and a pistol, he exclaimed,—

"My dear young lady, there's one without who will guard the doors while I am absent, which will not be long, for here there is no safety, I promise you. The villain who has so treacherously robbed you, and who has by this time escaped beyond our pursuit, will yet find means to seek your further destruction, if he thinks you are left alone and without protection; no one therefore must know that I have quitted the Cottage, even for a moment, but the one whom alone I can trust; in the mean time bar every door, and do not give admission to mortal, till you hear the whistle of Fisher Blust announce our coming."

This was accordingly done by Claribelle, the moment that Shelly had departed; meanwhile Agatha endured the most painful suspense and apprehension with her faithful attendant, whose former fears began to revive with the increased lateness of the hour, and the reflection that they were now left in the Cottage by themselves, saving the two boys, who were unable to defend them against the violence of any ruffian who might enter the Cottage in the absence of Shelly.

"I wish you would sit still, my dear young lady," cried Claribelle; for Agatha, in the disorder of her mind, was pacing the room with the utmost restless anxiety: "'tis impossible to hear any thing while you are walking about in this manner; had you not better sit down by me, and try to compose yourself?"

But Agatha, the unhappy Agatha, could not immediately attend to the consoling speeches offered by Claribelle; for the depravity and treachery of Paulo, which had now amounted to a perfect conviction, of the part he had taken against her in the hour of her misfortunes, had so completely shocked and surprised her, that every nerve and feeling was agitated to so great an excess, that she was hardly conscious of what she was doing; repenting that her jewels, which were now all that she possessed in the world, were not safe in the custody of the fisher, and which she determined on placing in his hands the moment she had an opportunity; if, indeed, no accident intervened to deprive her of this treasure, before he should arrive at the Cottage on the Cliff.

"Lord, Miss Agatha, how your dress keeps flipflapping about! one can hear nothing, I protest!" cried Claribelle; to which Agatha, resolutely determined that she would not suffer herself to be infected by the fears of her attendant, a little angrily, replied,—

"And what is that you are so anxious to listen to, Claribelle? how ridiculous for you to be alarmed at nothing!"

"At nothing, miss!" answered Claribelle, "do you call being shut up at this lonesome time of night, in this dismal, solitary, frightful place,—nothing? when we are surrounded by a pack of such villains as Paulo,—to be in the midst of robbers, murderers, and—Lord, miss! did you hear nothing?"

"Nothing but the sea-gulls, that are flapping their wings against the ivy;" answered Agatha, "you make me wild with your idle fears, Claribelle, which, if true, would answer no good to us, by talking of them; let us remain patient and quiet, we can do nothing better."

At length the approach of her protector was announced by the welcome sound of his whistle, and the yet more welcome sound of

his voice; and Claribelle, starting from her fearful and melancholy reveries, joyfully exclaimed, "There, my dear Miss Agatha, we are now safe, for here are our protectors; don't you hear the cheerful voice of Fisher Blust, and the sound of the whistle?"

"Yet stay, do not unfasten the door till he commands us;" cried Agatha, "listen, Claribelle, I hear the trampling of the horses' feet!—he comes;—the kind, the benevolent fisher comes! Heaven—Heaven be praised! fly, fly to the door, Claribelle! you may safely now give them entrance."

"Friends! friends! Miss Singleton;" exclaimed Peter from without. "Friends! open the door!" repeated the voice of Shelty; and Claribelle instantly unfastening the massy bar, Agatha once more joyfully welcomed the kind-hearted fisher to her dreary and uncomfortable mansion; but it was not alone to the fisher and Shelty that Claribelle had given entrance; they had brought with them two other protectors, in the persons of two fine, stout, athletic-looking young men, who were well armed, and able to defend her against a dozen myrmidons such as Paulo: they bowed to Agatha with the utmost deference and respect, as she timidly surveyed them, while the fisher exclaimed,—

"Shiver my topsails! but we have had a tolerable heat in coming to you, my dear Miss Singleton, for Shelty has made my heart wring with the account of the injury you have sustained by the treachery of that black, ill-looking dog—that Scoundrel, Paulo! but you are now safe, my dear girl, and will be protected from all dangers by those friends, who would sooner perish than let any one do you harm. Take courage, sweetest, for here are two as brave boys as ever smelt gunpowder come to see how the land lies at the Cliff, and where the rascal is gone to who has robbed you; and here is Peter Blust, who stands by your side, would sooner part with the last drop left in his veins than see a helpless woman wronged, while he has the means of saving her! So you went into your father's chamber, my dear, in order to see what effects he had left behind, and there you found——"

"Not a vestige remaining of his property, Sir;" cried the tearful Agatha, "his chests—his valuable collection of books, which he so greatly prized, all had been removed."

"Execrable scoundrel," exclaimed the fisher, "shiver my top-sails, If I would not give five hundred pounds to any man who would bring him before me, this very moment, with a rope's yarn twisted about his ugly neck ;" and the fisher glanced his eye toward the stoutest and bravest of the young men whom he had brought with him. "What think you, Sam Russel," uttered he, "of catching such a fellow, when you go a herring fishing, wouldst grapple with him, Sam ?"

"Aye, by my faith, would he, master," cried Shelly, "and I warrant me that Sam's grapple would be none of the softest ; I would back him against the stoutest wrestler in all Cromer, for giving a man a sound drubbing. What sayest thou, Samuel, wilt catch this foul lubber ?"

"Aye, by the soul of a fisherman ! I would I could find him this night, Master Shelly," answered the young man, with undaunted spirit ; "I would mind no more wringing his neck than I would a sea-gull's, for he that would harm such a lady as that, is worse than e'er a sea-monster that ever swam in the salt ocean. What think'st thou, Craftly ?"

As the latter part of this speech was directed to his young companion, who had retired a little in the back ground, he was obliged to come forward to answer it, and when he did so, he discovered a countenance the most manly, handsome, and expressive, that Agatha had yet seen, while he modestly replied, without, however, once glancing his eye toward the beautiful object who was seated before him,—

"I think no man worthy of being called such who would harm woman in any shape ; whether she be young or old, lovely or not lovely, she is still woman, and that alone gives her a right to his humanity,—to his protection."

"Bravo, Craftly ; shiver my top-sails, if thou hast not said rightly, my boy," cried the fisher, casting a look of the most cordial approbation at the features of the blushing youth, for he actually blushed at receiving the commendation of Fisher Blust.

But what is there in a blush ? it is sometimes, indeed, the effect as it is also the companion of innocence ; but does it not as fre-

quently betray guilt,—is it not a feature in hypocrisy as well as in sincerity ? yet it is lovely, it is pleasing ; and so pleasing did it now appear in the countenance of the young fisherman, for so Agatha imagined Craftly was, that she was inclined to think favourably of him, whether he merited her good opinion or not.

It was now proposed that Miss Singleton, whose agitation and uneasiness of mind had greatly exhausted her delicate frame, should retire to her chamber with her attendant, while the fisher, Shelty, and Craftly and Russel should sit up and keep watch all night, and thus detect any further depredation being made on the property of the Cottage on the Cliff, should any stratagem have been formed by the ruffian and his accomplices, for that he had not alone effected the robbery in so short a space of time was certain ; the removal of the chests, which were large and heavy, could not have been conveyed away so expeditiously, had he not had some one to have assisted him in the nefarious transaction, and it was probable that some of his accomplices still remained behind, for the purpose of making a second attack on the property of the hapless and unfortunate orphan. To prevent which, the fisher had taken the most proper precaution, both within and without the cottage, should the depredators again have the temerity to appear, and kindly used every exertion to raise the drooping spirits of the dejected Agatha, by informing her that she had only this one night to sleep at the Cottage on the Cliff, for that the ensuing one would see her safely bestowed beneath his own roof, where no future harm should assail her, and where his daughters would be proud and happy to receive her as a sister ; that they had prepared every thing for her reception, and were now only waiting for the moment when they should welcome her to Herring Dale with every mark of respect and affection ; that his servant, David, would be there at an early hour in order to assist Shelty in packing up what parcels or trunks she might have to remove from her own habitation to Herring Dale.

“ And then, my love,” cried the fisher, “ I will have the pleasure of taking you in my hand to my Jessy and my Olive, and, shiver my top-sails, if they love you half as well as I do we shall be as happy and as merry as the day is long. But won’t they love

her?" added the fisher, as he bent his eyes on the tearful, yet lovely dark ones of the beautiful Agatha, "look at her, Shelty," (for the young men had now retired, into the apartment in which the fisher had appointed that they should watch for the night,) "won't they love her?"

To which Shelty replied, looking at the downcast eyes of Agatha with a peculiar sort of expression,—

"Love Miss Singleton, master,—they must have hearts of stone that would not love her. There's Miss Jessie, God bless her sweet little soul, she will love Miss Singleton, and be as kind to her as if she were her own sister!—don't I know Miss Jessie Blust?—have not I known Miss Jessie ever since her sweet little lips could lisp out the name of her father? and she was the prettiest poppet my eyes ever beheld in my born days;—ah, poor Mrs. Blust, how she doated on Miss Jessie, and no wonder, she was the very model of her, as like as two peas in the same pod; she has just such fair hair and merry blue eyes, and when she smiles, and opens that pretty mouth of her's, with, 'good morning, Mr. Shelty,' I can't for my life, but think it's my dear mistress come out of her grave again."

"Avast there, friend Shelty!" cried the fisher, drawing his hand across his brow, and in a stifled tone of voice, that showed he was evidently affected by the manner in which Shelty had drawn a portrait of his beloved wife and favourite child; simple, indeed, was the colouring, but it was true to nature and to feeling; and the fisher felt it was so, for he hastily brushed a tear of genuine affection, while, looking at Shelty, he further exclaimed,—“Shiver my top-sails! dost think I can bear this heavy sail, without feeling my eyes a little swimmy? talk of my Jessie as long as you please, but say nothing about her blessed mother; I cannot endure it, Shelty;—’tis a wind that I cannot weather, for the soul of me! Poor Peggy! she was the pride of my heart, and I little thought to have buried her so soon after she brought me that cherub girl, who is, indeed, the image of her, and that is one reason why Jessie is the darling of my heart! not but what I love my Olive too, and why should I not? Olive is as good a girl as ever lived, only a little too high spirited or so, when the humour

takes her ; no matter, she is a very good kind of a girl for all that."

It was very singular that, to the latter part of the fisher's speech, Sheltly pretended to be deaf, for no answer was responded again to the fond father by Sheltly, to the praise of his elder daughter, which struck Agatha very forcibly that there must be something very repulsive in the disposition of Olive Blust, which could induce a man like Sheltly to be so silent on her merits, when even her father could not draw a sentence from his lips in favour of her ; which was an almost incontestible proof of his sincerity, and that what Sheltly had uttered to her, respecting the character of Miss Olive Blust, was too just a portraiture.

Still Agatha, ever liberal in her own sentiments, either on the merits or faults of others, shrunk from the painful and mortifying reflection, that she should ever be the subject of envy or ill nature in the house of the fisher, who had so generously offered her an asylum there, from no motive but the purest compassion and benevolence ; and much more would she dread to excite it in the bosom of his daughters, one of whom she had seen, and frequently entered into conversation with in her walks by the sea-side—the lovely, simple and unassuming Jessy, and whom, she already felt, she should always admire and prefer to her sister ; for though Agatha had only once seen Olive, yet there was a peculiar expression in her cast of features, although regularly beautiful, that was not pleasing. She had a dark piercing eye, but it was neither lively nor intelligent ; for the glances which she occasionally shot from it had more a mixture of disdain and pride, than of softness or feminine sensibility : the smile on her lip too, was scornful, rather than lovely, and her voice had more of shrillness than melody, when she spoke quick and loud, which was generally the case with any of her inferiors ; yet the figure of Olive Blust was gracefully tall, elegant, and even commanding, and, on the whole, her beauty was far more striking than that of her sister's, till Jessy opened her pretty mouth, and you listened to the sound of her voice, which was melody itself ; her complexion was much fairer than Olive's and glowed with health, and every feature was brightened with vivacity and good nature. Jessy too was small in stature, though prettily formed ; she was more plump than Olive, but she

had neither the elegance nor the majestic height of her sister's figure ; still Jessy pleased most, because she had an expressible charm about her that Olive never had, even in her most agreeable humour, and much less was she likely to acquire in the house of her father, which she governed as if she were born to command, and others to obey. Not that Miss Blust ever troubled herself in the household management of affairs, beyond that of finding fault with them whenever she thought proper ; all the fatiguing part of the business was left in the hands of Jessy, who assisted old Alice, the housekeeper, in all her occupation, such as pickling, preserving, making tarts and jellies, looking to the preparations being made for guests, whenever any were invited to the feasts of Herring Dale ; seeing that the furniture was kept in order—that the butter and cheese were well made, in short, nothing was done of this kind that was not superintended by the lovely Jessy, who, though two years the junior of her sister, Olive being nineteen years of age, was in every respect more fit to be the director and manager of a family, and the sweet girl was content to bear the burden on her own shoulders, as Olive, of whom she was passionately fond, might escape the drudgery and fatigue of the business ; which however, was without either the knowledge or the inclination of her father, and therefore concealed from him as much as possible ; He often, indeed, chid his eldest daughter for having too much pride, and endeavoured to mortify the great and inordinate share of personal vanity, of which she was possessed, but never had he to find fault with Jessy for a similar weakness ; at which times the fisher would exclaim, when he beheld Jessy in tears for his rebuke to her sister,—

“ Shiver my topsails ! what are you suivelling for, Jessy Blust ? did I speak to you ? did I call you to account for being so proud and disdainful ? ”

“ No, father,” answered the sobbing Jessy, “ I did not say you did, but you distress and pain my feelings the same as if you had been angry with me.”

“ Why, shiver my topsails ! how can that be, you little whimpering fool ? ” demanded the fisher, beholding the increased agitation of the lovely girl with astonishment, not unmixed with concern,

"By your being angry and displeased with Olive," replied Jessy, "she is my sister, and we are one; and when you give pain to her heart, my own shares in part of it. I am happy when you make Olive happy, and when I see her miserable I am wretched myself; and therefore my father is as unkind to his Jessy, as he is to her who has offended him."

"Come here, you dear little slut, and let me devour you with kisses;" cried the fisher, penetrated to the soul by so noble and generous a trait of disposition in his amiable child, "there you bussy, there's a hearty smack for you; now go and bring your sister Olive hither, and I will serve her the same, for the sake of my Jessy." In this sort of way, (the most resistless, surely, that can find a passage to a father's heart,) were all disputes adjusted, and all quarrels set aside in the family of Fisher Blunt, by the good natured intercession of the sweet Jessy, in whose lovely, artless bosom, anger or resentment never yet found a place; and with this disposition, which every body knew that she possessed, it is little wonder that she was a favourite with all; even her sister Olive, who scarcely loved any thing better than herself, could part with a small share of that self-love to give to Jessy, though she always found means to quarrel with her on the most trivial occasion; yet, as they never slept apart, the morning never rose to witness the lovely sisters in anger with each other.

When the intelligence had first arrived at Herring Dale of the untimely fate of Captain Singleton, and the wreck at the Cliff, the tender-hearted Jessy had wept abundantly at the situation of his lovely and unfortunate daughter, while she as bitterly lamented the poor sufferers who had perished in the wreck; but still the misfortunes of the poor unhappy Agatha affected her yet more deeply, and were ever uppermost in her thoughts: but Olive had not shed one tear, but was constantly lamenting that the absence of their father had deprived them of the company of all the guests that had been invited to Herring Dale, to commemorate the birthday of Jessy; to all of whom they had been obliged to send word not to come, in consequence of the misfortune that had happened at the Cliff; and this was, for many reasons, so severe a disappointment to the eldest daughter of Fisher Blunt that when David,

by order of his master, informed them of the catastrophe which had taken place, and of the manner in which Captain Singleton had lost his life, it occasioned a momentary shock, even to the feelings of Olive; but when David communicated the remainder of his intelligence, and added, that the Captain's daughter had been invited to Herring Dale, till her affairs were settled at the Cottage, the scornful smile of Olive was exchanged for a frown of the darkest and most envious hue, and she unfeelingly exclaimed,—

“ Miss Singleton coming to live at Herring Dale! and pray what is she coming here for?”

• “ Lord, Miss Olive, how can you think of asking such a question? because my master has invited her here, I suppose; and because she has had the misfortune to lose her father in such a kind of manner as to make every body pity her;” cried David, perceiving the storm that was gathering on the brow of his young mistress, “ and because——” David stopped, as if afraid to proceed, till the shrill voice of Olive made him start, and she exclaimed, with no small degree of impatience,—

“ And because what, you oaf?”

The oaf not sounding altogether very pleasantly in the ear of David, he hesitated not to pronounce,—

“ Why, because Miss Singleton is so beautiful a young lady, that nobody can look at her without feeling pity for her misfortunes, and who can help it?—she is one of the handsomest,—one of the sweetest,—most beautifullest——”

“ I wish you would go and mind what better becomes you, than stand prating here a parcel of ridiculous, idle nonsense, about Miss Singleton;” cried Miss Blust, with a yet more disdainful and angry frown, “ who asked you any questions about Miss Singleton? I don't want to hear any thing about Miss Singleton; I only want to know when my father is coming home, and whether he intends to stay out another night at the Cottage on the Cliff?”

“ Nay, Miss Olive, you need not be so cross and so snappish with a body, only because I happened to say that Miss Singleton was——” It was a fortunate circumstance for poor David that he made a full stop, or his young mistress would certainly have de-

posited the basin of milk, which she held in her hand, full in his face, so highly had he enraged her with his persevering description of the beauty of Miss Singleton, had not Jessy immediately come into the room, and the whole subject was again renewed by David, with additional force and energy; but how different was the conduct of the amiable Jessy on the occasion, who, lamenting the great affliction which had fallen on the Captain's family, declared how happy she should feel in consoling the unhappy Agatha under her misfortunes, and rejoiced at the invitation which her father had given her to Herring Dale.

"Where I am sure," added Jessy, "nothing shall be wanting on my part to make the dear girl comfortable, if I cannot make her happy."

"Not on your part, I dare say, Miss Jessy," answered David, as he sneaked out of the room, almost afraid to look behind him, lest he should catch another angry glance from the eyes of the incensed Olive, and no sooner was he gone, than the following conversation took place between the two sisters, began first on the part of Olive, who, flinging herself in a chair, pettishly exclaimed,—

"So, we have had a pretty night of it, and are as likely to have as pleasant a day, how provoking, after we had invited all our friends to the birth-day feast, and were to have had such a nice dance; father, too, to stay out so long, as if he could do any good at the Cliff now all is over."

"Jessy, whose thoughts were alone occupied by the sorrows of the unhappy Agatha, immediately replied,—

"Yes, Olive, all is indeed over: poor Miss Singleton, how I feel for her misfortunes."

No kind of response was made to this feeling and compassionate speech of Jessy, who continued,—

"So young, so beautiful, to be so suddenly deprived of her father, her only friend and protector."

"All your nice cakes, pasties, and jellies, too, Jessy, that you and Alice have been at such pains in baking, we shall never be able to cut them up for a fortnight, though we should have them at every meal." Olive had started this subject, and expressed this regret, merely to avoid speaking of Miss Singleton, it was not that

she cared for the loss of the entertainment, and Jessy, much shocked at her apathy, could not help expressing her sentiments at her conduct; while Olive tartly replied,—

“And pray, Jessy, what is Miss Singleton to you, that you concern yourself so much about her?”

To which Jessy mildly answered, “What every one would be to me, were they suffering under the same misfortunes, sister Olive, and what every one ought to be to all who profess to call themselves christians. What would you or I be, had we no father, protection, or friends? ’Tis very fortunate that we have, but surely we are not to forget to feel for those who have not; indeed, Olive, I am quite hurt to see you bestow such little thought on the situation of poor Miss Singleton.”

“If you are displeased at this part of my conduct, you may be pleased again,” cried Olive, very disdainfully; “I have my reasons for it, and that is sufficient.”

“No, it is not sufficient, Olive,” cried Jessy; “none I am sure that can excuse the want of humanity, you have just expressed toward an unhappy orphan.”

“Well, I don’t feel much anxiety about Miss Singleton, that I must declare,” retorted Miss Blust, “and I never shall, because I don’t like her.”

“But can you tell why you dislike her?” inquired Jessy, with some archness blended with concern in her love-beaming countenance; “if you will plainly tell me the cause, I will believe you.”

Olive perceived the arch look, which her sister had directed toward her, from the dark-fringed lashes of her blue laughing eyes, and quite unwilling that Jessy should slyly detect, or even suspect her real cause of dislike to the beautiful Agatha, she blushed deeply, but declined pursuing this conversation any further, saying she had other matters to attend to than the repetition of a name of which she was already quite weary; she did not know what she should be when she came wholly to reside with them at Herring Dale, whether she might not be able to like her better, but at present she did not wish to say any thing more about her:—

“And will that please you, Jessy, cried she, half inclined to be in good temper with her angelic sister, with whom she could not be seriously offended.

But Olive was condemned to endure a much severer investigation of her feelings, and to conceal emotions which she dared not reveal in the presence of that earthly being of whom alone she stood in awe, and that being was her father, who quickly arrived to aid the benevolent intentions of his lovely daughter, by immediately giving orders, that no one dared to dispute, and that was, that an apartment be prepared for the reception of Miss Singleton and her attendants, as soon as possible, at Herring Dale, and every other convenience and accommodation which the house could afford ; old Alice, being summoned on the occasion, desired to be informed where Miss Singleton was to sleep ; and to this inquiry, the fisher returned the following reply :—

“ Why, shiver my top-sails, in the very best bed I have in my house ; what, do you think, because the poor girl has lost her father, and has no friends in the world to look after her, that I am going to let her see that I know she is in distress?—no ; I will let her see no such thing, I promise you ; and, shiver my top-sails, if I see any one of you at Herring Dale reminding her of it, if I don't send you a packing at a moment's notice,—so go, you old hag, and ask me no more questions about Miss Singleton, I am her father now, and father to the poor boys that old Davy Jones* has spared from the wreck, and we are all one family, and a very comfortable snug family I say we shall be, in long winter nights, to keep the fireside warm.”

To these observations of her father, Olive remained quite silent, for he had given pretty tolerable hints of the reception which he expected Miss Singleton would find beneath his roof, and the respect with which she was to be treated by every member of his family ; it was not, therefore, to the interest of Olive seemingly to oppose the wishes of her father, by adopting a contrary behaviour, to an object who stood so high in his estimation ; so, for the first time, Miss Blust made a virtue of necessity, and offered her services with much alacrity, to assist her sister and old Alice in making such arrangements for the accommodation of their expected guests as were absolutely necessary, considering the addition which

* A sea phrase.

was now going to be made to their family ; and this unexpected exertion on the part of Olive, so delighted the affectionate and good humoured Jessy, that while they were employed in placing a few ornaments in the apartment which was intended for Miss Singleton, she threw her lovely arms around the neck of the beautiful (but too artful and insidious) Olive, and exclaimed,—

“ Ah ! my dear sister, how amiable you appear at this moment, and I think I never saw you look so handsome,—and what is it that makes you so ? I will tell you, Olive, you are now assisting me in the pleasing task of trying to render the unfortunate happy.”

CHAPTER VI.

“ The mother dove ne’er watch’d her young,
With half the pensive pleasure,
The hope, the fear, with which I’ve hung,
O’er thee, my bosom treasure.
Come, make thy pillow of my arm,
And if a tear should fall, love,
Let it not wake one fond alarm ;
’Twill be to Heaven—that’s all, love.”

Nor all the united persuasions of the faithful and vigilant Shelty, nor those of the young fishermen, could prevail with Mr. Blust to quit the situation he had designed for himself alone, and that was, of becoming stationary in the adjoining apartment, which was next to the chamber of Miss Singleton and her attendant, for which, perhaps, he had a motive that he did not choose publicly to declare, even in the presence of his so greatly-attached friends and kinsman ; for young Craftly was distantly related to a branch of the late Mrs. Blust’s family, and out of respect to the memory of a tenderly-beloved wife, had always been received with marks of peculiar kindness by the fisher, and by Olive and Jessy with all the familiarity of an affectionate relative except that Olive was the most distant and reserved in her manners toward him, though it was evident that these manners were rather affected than natural

toward the young and handsome Leontine ; for whenever he had been a considerable time absent from Herring Dale, or unusually long on his herring fishery, she frequently expressed regret, and even apprehension, about his safety, but this anxiety was never manifested but before her sister Jessy.

Never had Olive inquired of her father, during a fearful and long continuance of any tempestuous weather, if Leontine Craftly had yet returned to his native dwelling, or successful from his voyage round the coast ; not so the unaffected, frank, and open-hearted Jessy, she did not see why she should not feel anxious about the fate of her cousin Leontine ; (for so they always called him at the Dale) or what should prevent her from paying friendly visits to Margaret Craftly, his sister, in the absence of her brother, which were always kindly received. It was a romantic and secluded spot situated about a mile and a half distant from the habitation of the fisher. The father and the mother of Leontine were both deceased, but had left their little all, which they had scraped together by means of perseverance and industry, in which they had been tolerably successful, to their sole surviving children, Margaret, and Leontine ; the former of whom, being considerably the senior of her brother, and who had by choice embraced a life of celibacy, had the sole management and entire direction of his affairs ; and although their cottage was but humble, yet it was a happy one, for Leontine never found fault or quarrelled with his sister, but submitted to her government and advice on every occasion ; being well aware how far her experience and judgment exceeded his own, who always engaged in his hard and laborious occupation, and generally out at sea, was very glad to possess so faithful a guardian and inspector of his affairs as his sister, during his frequent long absences, as he was sure to find on his return, that the careful Margaret had rather increased than diminished the profits of their industry ; not that Craftly busied himself very much at home about household affairs, or the sum total of expenses that had been incurred in his absence, or that he passed the whole of his leisure hours in the company of his sister ; no, indeed, there was always "metal more attractive" to be found for Leontine at the house of his kinsman, the Fisher Blust, who always received

him there with the most cordial welcome. The lovely *Jessy* always smiled too, at his approach, with that good-humoured sweetness, which at all other times so remarkably distinguished her; and *Olive*, whose clear complexion was seldom lighted up with a tint of a roseate hue, could not hear of the safe return, and successful voyage of *Craftly*, without exhibiting some outward signs of satisfaction, when she beheld him at her father's; nor was *Leontine* himself insensible to the smiles and attractions of the lovely daughters of his kinsman, though he preserved an equal kind of balance in the favour of both, by paying them an equal portion of his attentions.

Never yet had *Leontine Craftly* been heard to give a separate opinion of the *Miss Blusts*, whom he always classed together: thus, whenever they happened to be the subject of conversation with him and his young companions,—“ Yes, they are very good girls,” or, “ yes, they are pretty lasses,” and so forth; so that it was utterly impossible to guess at the real sentiments of *Craftly*, with respect either to the merit or beauty of his pretty kinswomen. *Miss Margaret* too, it must be confessed, had likewise her favourites in the family of the fisher, but from prudential motives, best known to herself, she distributed her favours to one equally as she did to the other, and was therefore always a welcome visiter at the Dale, whenever her household affairs would permit her to step over and take a dish of tea, to which was always added a cake, manufactured by the notable hands of the sweet *Jessy*, which *Margaret* never failed to pass the highest encomiums on; taking care, however, that *Olive* should come in for her share of the compliment very soon after, so that good humour was preserved on all sides, without giving offence to either party.

Still *Margaret Craftly* had her little foibles like other folks, and from which human nature, let philosophers boast what they will, is inseparable; and that was an insatiate thirst of curiosity, and a propensity to know as much of the affairs of others as she did of her own; consequently when any new comer came to reside for any length of time in the neighbourhood of *Cromer*, she was always anxious till she could be informed of their history, their circumstances, and their quality—whether simple or gentle; and never

was there a finer subject for inquiry to the curious Margaret, than Captain Singleton and his beautiful daughter, when they came to live at the Cottage on the Cliff; and it may very naturally be supposed that a string of questions ensued, when she went over to her kinsman's to take a friendly dish of tea, which began in the following manner, by Miss Margaret somewhat lowering her voice into a sort of half whisper, as she reclined her arm on the back of Olive's chair, while she slyly observed to the intelligence communicated by the fisher of the Captain's arrival in their neighbourhood,—

"Well, I protest, he is more welcome to sleep there than I am, for what with one thing, and what with another, I think he is likely to enjoy a pleasant life of it; to be sure he has a right to live in the cottage after he has bought it of you, kinsman, and has laid out so much money in repairing of it; every body has a right to do what they please with their own money,—but the Captain is a strange man, or he would never think of shutting himself up in that solitary place, which is so frightful when the wind is stormy, that one would suppose the very sea was troubled with evil spirits, and witches and such like,—I say, kinsman, that it is an odd out of the way sort of thing, for a gentleman, like him, to choose to retire to the top of a Cliff, where no mortal soul will like to visit him for fear of the ghosts, which, they do say, haunt that cottage continually."

"Haunts a fiddle-de-dee!" cried the fisher, who had listened somewhat impatiently to the foregoing conversation of his kinswoman; shiver my top-sails, why Margaret Craftily, are you going to be such a fool in your old days as to give credit to any such idle story?"

To which Margaret replied,—

"Idle or not, kinsman, it is a 'Sea-side Story.'"

"Indeed, Cousin Margaret is right, father," cried Miss Olive Blust; "I have heard it myself twenty times, and so has Jessie, that a young lady all in white, sits in the ivy chamber, whenever the weather is stormy, and sings as if she were hushing a little baby to sleep; and Alice told us one night the whole history of her, and it is very shocking and melancholy, I assure you;—it was a lady who——"

" Came out of her grave on purpose to tell Alice the particulars of her story, very probably," cried the fisher, who had interrupted his daughter with a violent burst of laughter; " why, shiver my top-sails, dost think, girl, I will hear any more of this fool's nonsense; though I don't know but what there is some truth in the young lady, for I have actually seen her at the Cottage on the Cliff."

All ears were now open, and all eyes earnestly fixed on Fisher Blust, when he uttered these words, and the curious Margaret exclaimed,—

" Bless me, kinsman, you don't say so? what, have you indeed seen the lady on the Cliff?"

" Yes, and a more beautiful one I never beheld in my born-days," answered the fisher, " and what is more, she is as much alive as any of you—flesh and blood, I will answer for it."

" Then she is no ghost after all, father," cried Olive in astonishment, while, surprise was equally blended in the countenance of Jessy and Miss Margaret Craftily, who repeated,—

" No ghost, kinsman!" and the fisher burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, while he exclaimed,—

" Ghost, silly Margaret, I tell you, no,—unless you call Miss Singleton a ghost, for, shiver my top-sails, if I have seen any other but her at the Cottage on the Cliff, and no one else, I will wager my life on it."

The whole expression of Olive's countenance had changed during this speech of her father's, and an envious sneer was too perceptible on her underlip, while Miss Craftily felt her curiosity on the rack to hear something more of the family which now inhabited the dreary mansion on the Cliff; it was not indeed the first time she had received hints of the extraordinary beauty of the Captain's daughter, for her brother had seen and even talked of the charms of Miss Singleton, one morning when she had accompanied her father to look at the fishery, declaring that she was the most beautiful young lady he had ever beheld; and this circumstance just popping into the pericranium of the wily Margaret, she made use of it as a pretext for a further continuance of conversation, on a subject she was anxious to investigate much more than her kins-

man was aware of; and, without being at all conscious, or once suspecting that she was inflicting pain on the heart of the beautiful relative, who was sitting beside her exclaimed,—

“ Well, how stupid I must be, kinsman, not to know what you was driving at about Miss Singleton, for, if I had given it a thought, I should have presently known who you meant that was so exceedingly beautiful, and that it was the Captain’s daughter all the while; yes, it is very true, she is remarkably handsome, and very polite and affable, I assure you, quite a lady, bred and born, as they say.”

The cheeks of Olive were now suddenly flushed with a colour of the brightest crimson, and turning disdainfully, if not fiercely, toward Miss Craftly, she scornfully inquired,—

“ And pray, Cousin Craftly, who gave you this account of the Captain’s daughter so very particularly? You never heard any body say she was so exceedingly handsome besides my father, did you?”

Surprised at this interrogatory, but far more astonished at the warmth and manner in which it was expressed, Margaret, who possessed a kind of blunt sincerity about her, which she never attempted to conceal, promptly replied,—

“ Why yes, my dear, but I am very sure that I have thought, and from one who never speaks without his book, and that you all well know at Herring Dale; it was my brother Leontine, who extolled so highly the beauty of Miss Singleton, whom he once saw with her father as they were standing at the sea-side, when he was busy with his fishery, and moreover Leontine said——”

“ I don’t want to hear any more about what Leontine said,” cried Olive sharply, and hardly conscious at this moment of what she herself was saying, or the confusion and anger she had betrayed.

“ Well, well, child, there, I have done,” cried Margaret, “ though I do not see why you should feel so displeased at what I *did* say, there was no harm in speaking the truth.”

Olive not deigning to reply to this observation, disdainfully cast her eyes down to the ground, which, however, at this moment, were filled with involuntary tears, the real cause of which was only suspected by her sister Jessy, but which was attributed to sheer

envy by her cousin Margaret, and to something like jealousy by her father; not willing, however, to expose this failing of Olive's to the severe censure of his kinswoman, the fisher very ingeniously contrived to turn the current of the discourse; and no more being said of either the Captain or his beautiful daughter, Olive, by slow advances, recovered the tone of her natural humour, so as again to enter into conversation with her honest kinswoman, and before she departed from Herring Dale, to resume her wonted manner of kindness toward her, though it was very apparent that Margaret had left a sting behind; and that when she was going away, the friendly hand which Miss Craftly held out to her young relative was pressed by Olive with less warmth than usual, and the "good night, Margaret" was pronounced more frigidly than occasion required.

But the good-natured Margaret had not only quite forgotten the petulance which Olive had so imprudently betrayed, but, at parting, gave the most cordial and pressing invitation to her young and pretty kinswomen to favour her with an early visit, which Jessy promised to avail herself of as soon as possible, adding, with one of the sweetest smiles,—

"But it won't be till after the birth-day feast, you know, Cousin Margaret, and we shall all meet then, I hope to commemorate that happy day; Leontine will be at home too, perhaps, by that time, and he will come with you to the Dale, and we shall have such a merry day of it!" To which Margaret, heartily pressing the hand of the lovely girl, (for Jessy was the pride of her kinswoman,) replied,—

"True, my love, I had forgot that you have now nearly numbered seventeen years, though I can well remember the day that my Jessy was born: dear child, we have all reason enough to remember it, but we won't talk of it now, love.—Farewell, Fisher! and when you go to bed to-night put up your prayers for my brother Leontine; the weather is stormy, and he is exposed to it."

The fisher nodded his head expressively, but did not utter a word, save the response of a good night to his kinswoman, which was always his custom when the wind blew unfavourable for the fishery, and Margaret departed to her own habitation; but it may

easily be imagined what impression she had left on the heart of the fisher's eldest daughter, for the conversation which had taken place on this evening led to that fatal prejudice, which, ever after, Olive conceived against the lovely and innocent daughter of Captain Singleton; and which had become so rooted a principle of her mind, that not even the calamity which had befallen this amiable and unfortunate young woman, had the power to soften its continuing inflexibility, and which, the many charms that Agatha possessed, only served to increase and to strengthen; and that Miss Singleton was admired by every one, was not the only cause of Olive's antipathy toward her. There was another still more potent than the first; for she was the object of admiration with Leontine Craftly, whom she had never heard praise mortal besides herself; and that he should presume now to do it was a cause of displeasure so great, and a fault so heinous in the eyes of Olive, that she determined, on the return of Leontine from his fishery, to receive him in the most cool and disdainful manner, such as, she was aware, would be wounding to his feelings and insulting to his pride, while he would be unable to guess the cause; for Olive had every species of a real coquette in her composition, and delighted in tormenting even the only being that she ever fancied she could love; if, indeed, her heart was ever warm enough to be inspired with a tender emotion, Leontine, and Leontine only, had ever yet excited any interest there.

It was no wonder, then, that in such a heart envy, jealousy, or even suspicion should take place; yet beware of it, my dear young friends, should the following pages ever be perused by you, or particularly engage your attention, reflect how unworthy are either of these sensations to find a place in your bosoms; for they not only debase ourselves, but they injure others. Envy is contemptible, and jealousy is a mean and dangerous impression, as in cherishing it, it frequently exposes us to the most dangerous and even alarming situations. But, to proceed; such were the circumstances in the house of the fisher, and such was the untr tranquil state of Olive's feelings, when the fatal catastrophe, and the dreadful calamity succeeding it, took place at the Cottage on the Cliff; but even the misfortunes which had rendered Agatha Singleton an

unhappy orphan, by the untimely death of her father, had not touched the heart of this insensate girl with pity, at the severity of a fate which every one else pitied and commiserated; she still remembered the words of Margaret, who had declared that Leontine had admired the charms of Miss Singleton, and shut her heart out to compassion and to feeling.

By what, then, were those feelings suddenly surprised and confounded when, on the return home of her father, she was informed of his benevolent intentions toward the beautiful and unfortunate orphan, to whom he had offered an asylum beneath his own roof, and now commanded every one to treat with respect and kindness? what were now the sensations of the proud, disdainful Olive, when she should be obliged to offer that homage to Miss Singleton, which she despised, but which there was an absolute necessity for her now showing, or incur the penalty of her father's displeasure? Leontine too, even he would despise her, and censure her unfeeling conduct, if she betrayed any dislike to one who was suffering under such heavy misfortunes;—and what was Leontine's opinion to her? Olive, who was exactly opposite to a mirror at this moment, blushed deeply as she asked her heart this question, and a certain strange fluttering there too plainly told her a secret she wished to conceal from every one else, "that Leontine Craftly was an object of the highest importance to her happiness and peace."

Well, then, she must try to be civil to this Miss Singleton, when she came to live at Herring Dale, though she hated her; yet at this crisis of affairs she must let nobody know it; she had already said too much to her sister Jessy about this hated girl, and she must now repair the fault, or even Jessy would feel angry with her.

These were the motives that had induced Olive to be so active in the preparations which were making for the reception of Miss Singleton, and to assist her sister and the old housekeeper in getting things in readiness for their new comers; and the innocent Jessy, too good herself to form suspicions of others, never once imagined that such seemingly virtuous conduct was only the offspring of deceit, much less that it sprung in the heart of her sister, and that sister she so idolized.

In the evening that Agatha discovered that she had been treacherously robbed of her father's effects, and had sent Shelly to apprise the fisher of the dangerous situation in which she now stood at the Cottage on the Cliff, young Craftly had returned from the herring fishery, far more successful than on any of the preceding voyages he had made round the coast; of course his spirits were highly elated when he reached his native dwelling, and was folded in the arms of the affectionate Margaret, who, rejoicing in her brother's safe return, and the successful voyage he had made, forgot to mention the disastrous fate of poor Captain Singleton, till Leontine, after he had refreshed himself with a few hours sleep, made as many inquiries as he thought necessary, about his kinsman, Fisher Blust, and the health of his pretty daughters.

"They are both well, for any thing I know," cried Margaret, "except that my poor Jessy happened to have but a sorry birthday of it; poor soul, it was a sad disappointment to us, but there is no help for misfortunes!"

"Misfortunes, sister! and in the house of the Fisher Blust, my worthy kinsman!" exclaimed Leontine, instantly changing colour, and exhibiting signs of the greatest anxiety and impatience; "for Heaven's sake, tell me, Margaret, what misfortune has happened there? is Jessy ill?—or Olive?—or what?"

"Why, dear Leontine, you seem frightened!" cried Margaret.

"I am frightened, sister;" uttered he, "tell me, instantly tell me, is ——" It was Jessy that again trembled on the tongue of Leontine, but he was at last relieved from the apprehensions, which, to say truth, he most dreaded, of any accident having befallen the youngest daughter of his kinsman; for Margaret, without further preface, immediately related the calamitous fate of Captain Singleton, and the crew of the ship that had perished on the night of the tempest, at the Cliff. At the recital of which unhappy news the generous Leontine shed many tears, while he exclaimed,—

"Poor fellows, they have found a watery grave! But I hope they are happier aloft, where no future misfortunes can ever

"And where was the harm of it?" replied Margaret; "and pray, why should you not give your opinion of Miss Singleton as well as other folks, without offending that saucy minx, Miss Olive? who, every body may see, with half an eye, is only envious of this poor girl; and good reason why, because she is so much her superior."

"I should hope not, sister," cried Leontine, now putting on his hat, in order to go over to the fisher, "I should hope not, Margaret, for envy is the foulest weed that can take root in a female bosom. Olive is beautiful herself, and when nature has been so lavish of her beauties to her, why cannot she spare a small portion of it to others."

"Because she does not like to see others in possession of these gifts besides herself;" she is a proud ambitious girl, Leontine, and Heaven grant that our worthy kinsman may not have cause to rue the hour that Olive was born. I have not liked her ways for some time past, nor do I see what right she has to stick herself up in the parlour, as though she was the first lady in the land, while her sister Jessy has all the drudgery of household affairs to attend to every where else; the poor thing is made quite a slave of, and it is a great shame, I say, that our kinsman should suffer it." To which Leontine, who felt his feelings greatly irritated by the account of the servitude of the sweet Jessy, and who could not contradict the assertion, that she was the most active and industrious personage in his kinsman's house, replied with some warmth,—

"And yet she is as delicate as Olive, has feelings as acute, and a heart as tender with a person, which, oh, to me, possesses ten thousand more charms!—I mean, sister—that Jessy is——"

"Well, you need not tell me where she is;" cried Margaret, heartily enjoying a laugh at the expense of the embarrassed Leontine; "it is very plain to see where Jessy is at this very moment, brother.—Well, I protest I always thought as much! yes, when Jessy was no bigger than a rabbit, I always said to myself that she would be the——"

The talkative humour in which the sagacious Margaret now found herself would probably have been exercised a considerable time longer, had she not perceived, by suddenly glancing her eyes,

toward the door, that it was wide open during the progress of her speech, and that the bird was actually flown! for Leontine was gone; he had made a sort of precipitate retreat, to hide his blushes, which had pretty nearly covered the whole of his face, when he recollected how much he had been saying in favour of Jessy; and that it had partly revealed a secret, he was very far from wishing should be publicly made known to any one, and lamented his want of prudence and circumspection, when it was, indeed, too late; for Margaret had now found a key that had unlocked the treasure of his heart, and laid it open for her inspection, and, turn which way he would, he could not escape from her investigation.

In a few moments, however, he arrived at the habitation of his kinsman, where all unpleasant sensations were speedily forgot by the transports he felt at the sight of Jessy, breathing of fresh health and loveliness as ever, and welcoming him, after the dangers of his long and perilous voyage, with the most unaffected smile of joy and sensibility alternately blending with each other, in her pretty face. Olive Blust was not present when Craftly made his first entrance in the house of the fisher, who, the moment he caught a glance of his young kinsman coming into the gateway, sprang forward to meet him, and cordially tendered him his hand, while he exclaimed,—

“Shiver my top-sails, lad! how dost do? what, thee beest returned safe and sound, never the bit the worse for blowing winds and rough gales; thou hast had prosperous ones too my lad.”

“Yes, thank Heaven, Sir, I have been successful, far far beyond my expectations, considering the stormy and tempestuous weather we have had almost every day since I have been out;” answered Craftly; to which the fisher replied,—

“You may say that, Craftly: the devil has blown a gale upon our coast, the most terrible my eyes ever witnessed since I was a fisher; it has blown away our captain that went to live in my old crazy water-butt, you know, on the top of the cliff. Poor fellow; he is gone! but that is not all: on the night of the same storm a ship was wrecked, and every soul, saving two boys, perished; but I suppose you heard the whole of this misfortune before you set out for Herring Dale, from Margaret, so we will say no more about

it, for, shiver my top-sails, if my heart don't ache, whenever I think of it! but where is the use of grieving?"

"Grieving's a folly, kinsman," answered Craftly.

"So it is, lad! so it is," cried the fisher; "so we'll go in and wash it down with a stiff glass of brandy and water; and while I smoke a whiff of tobacco, you shall relate the adventures of your voyage and tell Jess and Olive what a mountain of fish you have brought home with you,—and that will make us all comfortable a bit, won't it? Shiver my top-sails, how glad I am to see thee, Craftly!"

And the fisher was glad to see his young companion, friend and kinsman, for every feature in his warm and benevolent countenance expressed the most joyous satisfaction; and after another cordial shake of the hand, they adjourned to the old oak parlour, into which Jessy had just brought her work, and was sitting down to it on the entrance of her father, who, pushing Craftly toward her, jocosely exclaimed,—

"There's my mountain daisy, fresh as a lark, sweet as a primrose, and plump as a partridge! Well, why dost not give her a hearty smack?—why dost shiver and shake so, lad? Jessy, why dost not get up, wench, and speak to Cousin Craftly?"

A salutation now was exchanged between the young kinsfolk, of a much warmer kind than either of them was conscious of at the first moment,—and perhaps a certain pressure of Craftly's hand, reminded Jessy that the joy they both expressed at beholding each other after so long an absence, was something more tender than sisterly or brotherly affection, for the hand was quickly and gently withdrawn, and the cheeks of Jessy glowed with blushes, which received a deeper tint, as her sister came into the room, and placed herself between her and Craftly, who took good care to be equally fervent in his salutation of Olive, who, however, received it with a frigidity bordering on rudeness, and who congratulated him on his successful voyage with a mixture between disdain and pride, her scornful lip scarce deigning to smile even on the pleasantry of her good-humoured father, who, for some reason or other, did not seem to notice the altered manner of his eldest daughter toward his young kinsman, but, calling for his fa-

avourite beverage and some pipes and tobacco, bade Craftly sit down and regale himself, and consider that now his anchor was afloat there was no squalls that would upset him, and that he was always in safe harbour, and sure of a snug hammock, whenever he was at Herring Dale.—

“For, shiver my top-sails,” uttered he, “If I don’t love thee, lad, as if thee were my own son; and so does Jess, and so does Olly, too, for all they look so shy. Come, girls, what hast thee good in the house to give your cousin Craftly for supper?—a chicken, mayhap, and a bit of bacon,—I warrant me he has stomach enough for either, hast not thee, Craftly?”

“I am much bounden to you, kinsman, but I promised Margaret to return before supper-time,” answered Leontine, a little piqued at the coldness that Olive had evinced toward him.

“Didst thou!” cried the fisher, “then shiver my top-sails if I let you, that’s all, so let Madge pout and scold, if she pleases, but I will have my way,—Jess, do as I bade you.”

Jessy immediately arose—“Cousin Craftly will stay to oblige you, father,” uttered she, and smiled.

That smile was irresistible, and Craftly sat down to supper, with his kinsman and his family, without a moment’s further consideration.

CHAPTER VII.

“Youth is sweet with many a joy
That frolics by an artless measure,
And age is sweet, with less alloy,
In tranquil thought and silent pleasure:
For He who gave the life we share
With ev’ry charm his gift adorning,
Bade Eve her pearly dew-drops wear,
And dress’d in smiles the blush of morning.”

As every man (let him deny the assertion how he will) has his peculiar likings and dislikings, his vices, and his virtues, have we

any right to suppose that the Fisher Blust was without them? Born on the rough seas, his cradle had been the tempest, and the keen-blowing winds his nurse; but his education was the gift of Heaven, for earth had not bestowed it on him; he was also the favourite of fortune, but by unworthy or ungenerous means he had never obtained her smiles, and therefore was his heart cast in humanity's soft and purest mould, though his language was not always that of smooth-tongued hypocrisy, or polished eloquence, but it flowed from nature, it flowed from feeling,—Heaven had inspired it, and that is the most irresistible language in the world.

Yet it was certain that the Fisher Blust had his peculiarities of humour, in which he could never bear the slightest opposition, or rather contradiction, to his favourite propensities, one of which was, that when sitting down to his meals, with his family around him, he had given the most peremptory orders never to be called from thence, or disturbed by trifling occasions, on which more than once he had set the whole of his household in an uproar, by betraying marks of the most violent and impetuous passion. The consequence was, that when Sheltly arrived at Herring Dale, and informed David that he had particular business with the fisher, and must see him immediately, that he met with a direct refusal to this request, from both David and old Alice, protesting that whatever he had to say must be deferred till their master had eaten his supper, to which he had only just sat down, and from which, on pain of his displeasure, and even dismissal of their service, they never dared to disturb him.

“But what does it signify talking to you about that concern, Mr. Sheltly,” cried David, “when you know it as well as I do, that lived so long in his service before I was born;—though you have got the good chance to be in housekeeping now, you have been a servant yourself, and know the ways of Fisher Blust, and that if the devil was riding across his sheet anchor, he would not stir an inch to set it afloat, when once he is stowed in his hammock.”

“And, more than that, he has got his kinsman with him, young Mr. Craftly, who is just returned from the herring fishery,” cried Alice, who was warming herself before the embers of a large wood fire, after the fatigues of her cookery, without observing the anx-

ity, and even impatience which was so strongly blended in the countenance of honest Shetty, who, exceedingly provoked at the old woman's apathy, as well as the indifference of David, exclaimed,—

“ I tell you that I must see the fisher, and see him I will ; I have got a message from Miss Singleton, that admits of no delay, and, as to Mr. Craftly being here, that is no hinderance to the business, for mayhap he will go along with us. There is sad work going on at the Cliff, I promise you, and I should not wonder if, before the morning, we shan't all be blown up with gunpowder, and treason, and such like.”

“ The Lord be good unto me, Master Shetty, and why did you not tell us this before ?” exclaimed Alice, instantly putting herself into a more alert position, while David, not staying to hear further particulars, betook himself into the presence of his master, to whom he imparted the intelligence he had just received from honest Shetty, which put the whole of the party, Olive only excepted, in the utmost consternation ; and Shetty was instantly summoned before them, and simply related the disastrous event which had taken place at the Cottage on the Cliff, and of the danger which still awaited the situation of Miss Singleton, if she continued there without her property being protected from further molestations from the hands of the treacherous Paulo, who, though he had escaped, had doubtless more accomplices in the business.”

By this time the fisher had quitted his station at the head of his table, and, calling loudly to David, bade him muster all the arms together that they had in the house, and to send for Sam Russel, the fisher.

“ Meanwhile,” cried he, “ Craftly, let you and I arm ourselves in the best manner that we can to attack these villains, if they venture there to-night to commit further robbery. Come, let us hasten to the Cliff, and let us save that dear, suffering, persecuted angel from being destroyed.”

In one moment all was bustle and confusion at the house of the fisher. Sam Russel quickly made his appearance, with half a dozen stout fishermen at his heels, who, all prepared for defence, generously and manfully offered their services to protect the pro-

perty of Miss Singleton from any further depredation of the robbers, at which the fisher exultingly exclaimed,—

“ True hearts of oak, every mother’s son of you, brave boys ! and you wont be the worse for saving a woman in distress, take my word for it ; it will sign your passport, my honest lads,—there ! ” and the fisher pointed his finger upward, with an expression in his rough and benevolent countenance, the nature of which could not be doubted or mistaken in its meaning ; for every heart felt it, and every eye glistened with something like a tear.

What ! a tear ! and of sensibility too, in the eyes of fishermen ! rough, hardy, and uneducated ; unskilled to fawn, or flatter, where interest only leads the way, and how much profit they will gain by their labour is their only calculation through life. Is it possible that such beings can melt into tender sympathy, and tears of sensibility ?—Hush your revilings, severe and censorious critics, and ask your own hearts the true and only source from which sensibility flows !

Is it not from the consciousness of having performed some kind action, and of having bestowed some compassionate thought on the sufferings of our fellow-creatures ?—and more than all, when we have by any means relieved those sufferings, and behold the change we have produced in their care-worn countenances, and the burden we have removed from the anguished heart, and the tear we have dried on the languid cheek ;—if there is no pleasure to be derived from these reflections, why, then virtue is a bubble, and humanity a cheat.

For the elucidation of these reflections, however, we will only apply to the fisher, who, desiring David to bring a small keg of his best brandy before he departed from Herring Dale, gave a full bumper of this enlivening beverage to each of the brave fellows who, unasked, had come forward to assist in the cause of humanity, and who, though no reward awaited them, were ready to protect the property by every exertion in their power, of the unfortunate daughter of Captain Singleton.

It was not that Craftly had uttered a word more than the rest of his companions to assist in this benevolent undertaking, or had expressed any sentiment warmer than humanity in the cause of Miss

Singleton, that could give offence to the already-roused jealousy of Olive Blust toward the lovely orphan, who had excited, and drawn all hearts to befriend her ; but there was a peculiar expression in the countenance of her always proud and disdainful, though beautiful features, that, some how or other, attracted the attention and, perhaps excited the displeasure of her father ; when Jessy, on his departure from the gateway, intreated that he would bring Miss Singleton home with him, and added, with her usual softness,—

“ Pray, father, do not let her stay another night in that horrible place ; indeed, indeed, I am so miserable till I know that she is safe from the dangers of that terrible Cliff ! Cousin Craftly, pray, pray be careful of poor Miss Singleton ! don’t let her be hurt, pray don’t ! ”

Poor Jessy, in the affectionate warmth of her nature, had even followed Craftly and her father to the gateway with this injunction, hardly conscious of what she was saying or doing at the moment ; but so beautiful did she appear in the eyes of Leontine, for the generous compassion she had evinced, and her anxiety for the fate of the suffering daughter of Captain Singleton, that almost involuntarily, he exclaimed,—

“ Oh, Jessy ! fear not for the safety of Miss Singleton ! an unhappy orphan, like her, who would not commiserate, and who would not befriend ? while prayers such as thine will ascend to Heaven itself, angels will waft them there, the most resistless, because they are the most pure, of human homage ; for Jessy, what would not Leontine effect ?—what would he not risk ?—what would he not endure ? Oh, Jessy ! ask me not to be mindful of Miss Singleton, when, every time I look at her, she will only the more strongly remind me of the kindly, gentle, and compassionate angel, who is so solicitous and anxious for her safety ! ”

Although these words were uttered in the lowest tone that was possible, and had reached no ear, save Jessy’s alone, yet she trembled, and turned pale with apprehension, fearful that a sentence should have been overheard by any body else ; for Craftly had never addressed her in this language before, and, however pleased or suddenly surprised by the effect which it produced upon her feelings, there were sufficient motives and causes why she should

never permit such language to be addressed to her again, and, as Craftly lingered a few minutes longer in the gateway, it was very likely that he expected her to make some sort of reply to this direct, and even abrupt, avowal of his passion. There was no time, then, like the present, and not a moment to spare, to give him to understand the nature of her sentiments on the subject, and that such an avowal must neither be listened to by her, nor yet repeated by him again, and that, whatever pain it cost her, there was a necessity of telling him so, but which a circumstance now entirely prevented; for Olive, surprised that Jessy did not return immediately after she heard the trampling of the horses' feet from the gateway, came to inquire into the cause of her absence, and there, to her utter astonishment, and no less displeasure, discovered Leontine in conversation with her, who also, confused at the sudden appearance of Olive, uttered, with evident marks of embarrassment,—

“I shall remember all you have said, Jessy, relative to Miss Singleton; I will not fail to tell her, you may depend upon it:” and, setting spurs to his horse, was out of sight in a moment, leaving on the countenance of Olive an expression of ill-concealed rage and jealousy, and on that of the lovely Jessy, a confusion of sentiments hard to be defined; yet that her sister was far from guessing at the nature of the conversation which Craftly had been addressing to her, and which she should never be informed of, gave her the most secret satisfaction; she was therefore prepared for any questions which Olive might think it necessary to ask her, with the calmest composure, and, linking her arm in her's, they returned to the house together, and being late, also retired immediately to their chamber, but certainly not to enjoy very gentle, or pleasing slumbers; for Olive was not only out of humour with Jessy, but exceedingly offended with her, because she had been conversing with Leontine about Miss Singleton, and did not, unsolicited, immediately disclose what she had been saying respecting an object, whom she now mortally detested, in the supposition that she would be, if she was not already, a most dangerous rival in her way of attracting the attention of her cousin Craftly.

Meanwhile the thoughts and reflections of Jessy, were not more

comfortable or pleasing than those of her sister's, for she dreaded the discovery of Leontine's partiality for her, beyond any earthly thing, because she felt more than half convinced, that he was the object on whom Olive had placed her affections; and though Leontine was far from being indifferent to her, yet she spurned at the ungenerous thought of superseding her sister in his esteem; neither could she approve of the abrupt and hasty manner which Crafuly had intimated that she was dear to him. He might have recollected that there was some delicacy due to the situation of a female; of his great obligations to her father, and of the little probability there was of his ever succeeding in her affections; neither could Leontine himself be blind to her sister's predilection in his favour, although she had adopted a singular and unpleasing method of showing it; yet it was perceptible enough that she really preferred him to any one else, and she considered his manner of addressing her on this evening rather an insult offered to her darling Olive, than any compliment paid to herself, and determined to resent it at some more convenient opportunity.

Thus was the sweet restorer, balmy sleep, withdrawn from the eyes of the lovely sisters, till nearly the approach of morning, when they only slumbered, but not rested, from the harrassed and perturbed state of their feelings. To which we will leave them for the present, while we pay a visit to the inhabitants at the Cottage on the Cliff;—the morning which succeeded to the night, on which the kind-hearted fisher and his young and brave companions, had been the faithful vigils to protect and guard over the safety of the afflicted, suffering, and persecuted daughter of Captain Singleton.

Never, indeed, since the loss of her parent, had Agatha been permitted to enjoy such undisturbed repose, and, exhausted by the tortured state in which her feelings had been kept for successive hours, and the constant dread and apprehensions of something more alarming, than even her present misfortune, awaiting her, Agatha slept profoundly; though before she had retired to her chamber for the night, she used every persuasion in her power to prevail on her benevolent protector to quit his stationary situation, of sitting up the whole of the night in the adjoining chamber.

“ Indeed, dear sir, I cannot rest satisfied at your depriving your-

self of your rest, and enduring so many hours of fatigue on my account," uttered she.

At which the fisher smiled, and, shaking his head, declared that nothing should alter his resolution; "and as to fatigue, my dear," exclaimed he, "I should be glad to know which of us is best able to bear it, you or I; dost think that a seaman must regard wind and weather, when he is steering his little cock-boat safe into harbour? not he, indeed; I am a tough heart of oak, Miss Singleton, never fear me; I shall take no harm with that watch-coat about my shoulders, and this pouch of tobacco by my side, I warrant me! there's Shely too, will now and then light my pipe, and trim my lamp, and we shall jog on merrily till the sweet little cherub that sits up aloft ushers in the break of morning; so get thee to bed, child, and sleep soundly, there's no one shall disturb thee, I promise thee, while Peter Blust is the sentinel that guards the door."

"Agatha, perceiving that the fisher was resolutely bent on his purpose of keeping watch all night next to her chamber, and that no argument of her's could prevail upon him to resign or quit his post, retired, with, "Good night, Sir, and may Heaven eternally bless and reward you!" And Claribelle and she arose the next morning so comfortably refreshed by their slumbers, and so relieved from the terrors which had possessed their minds, since they had discovered the treachery of Paulo, that they were both able to prepare a comfortable repast for their generous and kind protectors, to whom, as soon as the breakfast was ready, Claribelle immediately repaired at the command of her young mistress; and the fisher, who had taken several short naps during the course of the night, was presently roused by the voice of the attendant, and instantly telling Shely to go and call his kinsman and Sam Russel, and bring the two boys along with him, he entered the apartment of the now-smiling Agatha, where he received her heart-felt thanks, and the warmest congratulations of the no less grateful Claribelle.

"Well, my love, there has been no occasion for swords, pistols, or gunpowder, as yet," cried the fisher, taking his seat by the fire, and close to Agatha, "and thou hast rested comfortably, hast thou? well, so much the better, thou hadst need of it, child;

now then, let us return thanks to Providence, that things are no worse, and enjoy a comfortable meal. There's my girls, I dare say, are waiting for me, but they may wait long enough: they won't see my face at Herring Dale, till I take you with me, shiver my topsails, if they do! come, Mistress Claribelle, now then, for your tea and buttered toast."

And the fisher was just going to extol the flavour of the hyson tea, when Sheltly, Craftly and Russel entered, followed by the two boys, for whom a table had been spread apart, and on which was placed a plentiful supply of provisions, and the best that the cottage could afford, while the smiles of the lovely hostess sweetened a repast, the most welcome that the fisher and his young kinsman had ever partaken of, because it was accompanied with the pleasing and gratifying sensation of the purest benevolence;—the consciousness of having performed a generous action, and the reward which Heaven always bestows on it,—self-approval!

CHAPTER VIII.

'Fie, fie! unknit that threat'ning unkind brow';
 And dart not scornful glances from those eyes,
 R' blots thy beauty, as frosts bite the meads;
 Confounds thy fame, as whirlwinds shake fair buds;
 And in no sense is meet, or amiable.
 A woman mov'd is like a fountain troubled,
 Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty;
 And while it is so, none so dry or thirsty
 Will deign to sip, or touch one drop of it."

Nothing was greater than the contest which was exhibited in the manners and the countenances of the two boys, when Sheltly brought them into the apartment of Miss Singleton, nor had any description so entertained the fisher, as that which Sheltly, had given him of the behaviour of the little hardy stranger, who had hitherto obstinately persisted in refusing, even to tell his name; and, as the fisher had desired that he might be treated with the

utmost gentleness, he had been suffered to give way to all his little pets and humours, without any control whatever to oppose him.

Now, however, it was thought necessary to impose a little restraint on so violent a disposition, for not even the presence of so much company either abashed, or prevented him, from greedily devouring his meal in his usual manner; and when he had taken a sufficient quantity of what he chose, he got up hastily from the table, and was going out of the room without further ceremony, when the fisher, with some authority, called out,—

“Where are you going, young gentleman? I want to speak with you:” to which the little savage gruffly replied,—

“I am going where I please, and I am no gentleman: what did you call me gentleman for, pray?”

It was almost impossible for the fisher to resist laughter at the air of effrontry with which this speech was uttered by the undaunted little stranger; but the singular manners of this extraordinary boy excited his astonishment and curiosity in such a degree, that in a more soft tone he bade him sit down beside him, at which he exclaimed,—

“Why can’t I stand? I don’t like sitting?”

“Why, then, standing or sitting, I don’t much care,” said the fisher, “provided you will answer the questions I am going to ask you, and tell me the truth; and if you don’t, I will make you.”

“Make me?” demanded the little fellow, with firmness.

“Yes, I will punish you;” retorted the fisher; “do you understand the meaning of that word?”

To the utter astonishment of the fisher, and all present, he boldly answered,—

“Understand you? to be sure I do, you will beat me; and so you may, if you think I deserve to be beat, only tell me for what, and I shan’t mind it.”

“He is no coward, at all events;” cried the fisher, in an under tone to his kinsman, who replied,—

“And he has one of the finest countenances in the world; I would venture my life that the boy has been dealt unfairly with, and is not what he appears a base-born hireling.”

"I am of the same mind, Craftly," cried the fisher, and turning to the boy, who did not appear the least intimidated by the foregoing conversation, he demanded to know what was his name, and that of his parents.

"Parents!" cried the boy, staring wildly.

"Yes, your father and mother; tell me who you belong to, and where you came from in the ship you sailed in, that has been wrecked on this coast: tell me the truth of these particulars," uttered the fisher, softening his tone gradually to his usual benevolent custom, when he thought any one was suffering, or had been ill-treated; "and, so far from beating you, I will shew you every indulgence and kindness in my power."

Agatha, from the moment that this boy had entered the apartment, had fixed her eyes steadily upon him; she had somewhere beheld a countenance that resembled his, but where, her utmost recollection now failed to inform her of; yet she was unable to remove her eyes from his expressive features, which, as Craftly had observed, bore a stamp far more noble than the style of his rude language, or the hardness of his manners; and the idea of his being some unfortunately neglected, and deserted offspring, whom no one had the humanity or the generosity to own, struck her most forcibly, and, some how or other, strongly interested her for his hapless destiny; and whether the boy had the sagacity to perceive the impression he had made on a countenance so enchantingly lovely, that its softness could not be mistaken, or whether, her being the only female who had ever regarded him with compassionate interest, but the moment that the fisher had pronounced these words, he sprang toward Agatha, and, sinking on his knees, caught hold of a part of her dress, while he exclaimed, in the most alarmed and terrific accents,—

"If I tell him my name he will send me back to the Black Forest, and the woman and the man will beat me; they beat me before, when I ran away from them. Save me, lady! save me! you look like an angel; perhaps you are come down from Heaven on purpose to save me!" And the boy clung fast round the beautiful arm, which neither had the power, or felt the inclination, to resist him.

While the astonished fisher continued to gaze alternately on the boy and her, without being able to utter a single sentence, at length, more collected, he turned to Craftly and exclaimed,—

“Why, shiver my top-sails, cousin Craftly! did you ever see any thing like unto this? look, how he clings to that angel’s arm for protection! poor fellow! he has been hardly used; if he tells the truth, well, well, he is come into safe quarters: there is the dove protecting the young lion, and who would harm him?”

“That an angel of compassion hovers over,” cried Craftly; “no, kinsman, let Miss Singleton have the management of this boy, and, take my word for it, she will soon tame him.”

This was accordingly done; every one left the apartment but Claribelle and little Alfred, whose countenance confessed the sympathy and sorrow he felt for his companion, and fellow-sufferer in misfortune, and, no sooner were they left alone, than the boy quitted his hold of Agatha, on her repeated assurance that no one should hurt him, and that she had taken him under her own protection.

“And will you never let me leave you?” uttered he, “will you never forsake me, lady?”

“No, you will be safe, under the same roof where I shall be protected,” returned Agatha; “you have the same friend, who will treat you as kindly.”

“And who is that, lady?” demanded the boy, with some impatience.

“Even he who has just quitted us, the Fisher Blust; he who took you and your companion from the sea-beat shore, on which you were driven by the tempestuous waves, and, when you were nearly expiring, brought you hither, when you were quite insensible of your situation; he has since fed, clothed, and cherished you; you owe him gratitude for so much humanity and kindness; you might,—you would, have perished, but for the assistance that he afforded you.”

“Indeed!” cried the boy; “was he indeed so good to me? then may I perish, in right earnest, if ever I forget it! what shall I do for him, lady? shall I gather sticks for him in the forest, or fight for him? I can fight very well, and fire off a gun; I shot at

a crow once, and never missed my mark ; they wanted me to knock down a pigeon, that had some young ones, but I could not bear to do this, because she tried to cover the nestlings with her wings ; so I let her go, and then I got beat for it, but I did not mind that, so I had saved the poor bird."

" Kind boy ! and you acted rightly ;" cried Agatha, bestowing a look of the sweetest complacency on him, at the same moment that she felt a stronger interest than ever in the fate of her little favourite, and bidding him sit down quietly beside of her, and that he had nothing to fear, requested he would tell her his name, and to whom he belonged, and that part of his history which he did not choose to inform any body else of.

" Then I will not fear to tell you, lady," cried the boy, " because you have promised to protect me."

" And I will protect you, to the utmost of my power ;" uttered Agatha, " yes, I will protect you, though I will not take an oath ; yet, take my word,—it is my bond."

" Yes, lady, I will take your word, even unto death," uttered the boy, " for I know that you will never break it to poor Wolf."

" Wolf !" exclaimed Agatha, fixing her eyes steadily upon the fine crimson glow which now animated every feature ; " and is that thy name, boy ?" to which he instantly replied,—

" So they told me in the Black Forest ; but I have often thought that I had some other name, that did not sound so harshly ; for once I heard Ronaldo say that my father, who died in battle, was a brave warrior, and my mother, a beauteous lady : yet, may be, he lied, for he was drunk when he said so ; and when I told him what I had heard, he tied me to a tree and beat me."

" Unnatural and cruel monster !" exclaimed Agatha ; " and how came you, poor boy, in the hands of so bad a man ?"

" I do not know, lady," answered he, " For Rolando told me that I was born in the Black Forest ; so I began to think, when he used to speak a little kindly to me, that he was my father ; but, when he beat me so sadly, I could not think so, lady, because something told me in my heart that if Ronaldo was my father he would not be so cruel,—then I was afraid of the woman too !"

"A woman!" exclaimed Agatha, "and was there then a woman to witness such barbarity, without interposing in your behalf? oh, no! you mistake, boy, she could not be a woman!"

"Yes, lady, Ronaldo called her woman," cried the boy, "but she did not look like you; she was old, and so hideous, that I could never bear to look upon her; and she used to beat me too; and when I pouted at her, she would give me nothing to eat but black bread and water; so, one day, when they sent me in the forest to gather firewood, it began to lighten, and to thunder, and the rain poured heavily, so I sat down all night under a tree, for it was very dark, and I could not find my way back again; when morning came, I could not see where I had laid my bundle of sticks, nor the basket that the woman gave me to put them in, and I was terribly afraid she would catch me, and beat me; so I ran a great way out of the Black Forest, till I got into a place where there were houses, and ships sailing in the water, and churches, and castles, and men and women walking about; but they did not mind me, though I was so cold, and so hungry, and cried so sadly."

"No, poor boy, because you were the child of poverty!" exclaimed Agatha, shuddering at the inhumanity of mankind; "hadst thou been the son of bloated affluence, or the favourite of fortune, they had looked more kindly on thee, and welcomed thee with blessings that thou didst not want! and so, poor Wolf, you were both hungry and cold?" repeated Agatha, regarding the young adventurer with the most compassionate softness.

"Yes, lady," answered he, "but I did not hunger long, for I saw some men by the water side, standing by a boat, and they had plenty of victuals so one of them looked very hard at me and asked me if I was hungry; and when I told him of the Black Forest, and Ronaldo, and the woman, how sadly they used me, and that I was afraid to go back again, he swore a terrible oath, and said I should go along with him and his companions, on board of the ship that they were going to sail in, and where nobody would beat me; and then he swore another great oath, lady, and said that he would be d——if they should, while he had a spunk of rope yarn about him."

"He was a sailor," cried Agatha, half smiling, "a true British

sailor, and we must pardon rough language; when it carries a benevolent countenance and a warm heart to atone for its defects."

"And he was very kind, lady;" continued the boy; "he took me on board of the great ship, and asked leave of the captain for me to go to sea with him; he said he would give half of his wages to keep me in meat and drink, while I was there, so the captain let me go, and I never was so happy in my life before; I had plenty of victuals, and nobody beat me; Jack would not let them, and they were afraid of Jack; but I shall never see Jack any more, for when the wind blowed hard, he used to climb up aloft, and, one dark night, he fell overboard into the sea, and—and—" unable to proceed with this affecting account of his faithful and only friend, poor Wolf burst into a flood of tears, and continued sobbing violently for many minutes.

Meanwhile Agatha, who had caught his last words, and guessed at the melancholy fate of poor Jack, was unable to contain the powerful sensations which now rushed upon her heart, and the nearly similar fate of her lost, lamented father, burst upon her recollection with additional and resistless force.

"He perished, then!" exclaimed she; "thy only friend! thy generous protector perished, and was lost to thee for ever!—and so did mine, dear boy! neglected and unfortunate boy! thy destiny then, in part, resembles Agatha's; alike have we sustained calamity, and by the same means! alike, then, shall you share the little comforts which Heaven has yet spared to me, or has yet in store. Wolf, dear Wolf, you shall henceforth be the brother of my heart, and I will be your sister!"

Agatha stretched forth her hand toward the now transported boy, who almost devoured it with kisses, while he exclaimed,—

"What, poor Wolf the brother of such a beauteous lady! then I will never cry for Jack again as long as I live; he used to say he would take me back to Denmark, when the ship returned, because he was bound to sail in her with Captain Alfred; but you know, lady, that will never happen now, because both the ship and Jack are gone for ever!"

Poor Alfred, who had silently listened to this melancholy recital, not without sympathy and concern could ill bear the mention

of his father's name, and hung down his head to conceal the fast and trickling tears which fell over his beauteous face, (for this boy was lovely beyond description,) as if unwilling to renew the grief—either of his companion or Miss Singleton, but they soon perceived how greatly he was affected, and both endeavoured to pacify and console him: Wolf flew to his side, threw his arms round his neck, and affectionately embraced him.

"Do not weep thus, dear Alfred," cried he, "because I have got a sister so good and so beautiful, for I will try to make her your sister too."

"Will you, pretty lady, love Alfred, as well as you love Wolf?" inquired the half sobbing Alfred. To which Agatha, regarding them both with peculiar earnestness, gave a hand to each of them as they bent over her, while she exclaimed,—

"Dear boys! yes, ye are both my friends and brothers! every son of sorrow is the brother of Agatha Singleton, and every daughter of misfortune shall be her sister; and though we are fatherless by the ordination of Almighty Providence, yet let us always remember that if we rely on its protection, that He who clothes the lily of the field, and provides for the tender nestlings of the air, will be a father to us all!"

CHAPTER IX.

"I know, beneath the blushing rose,
A cank'ring worm is often found;
And even while it sweetest blows,
Its leaves with thorns will most abound.
And well I know the peach's bloom,
A rugged, flinty heart conceals;
While what is hid within the tomb,
Its gilded sculptures ne'er reveal."

DURING the conversation which passed between Miss Singleton and little Wolf, David had arrived from Herring Dale to assist in the removal of the family from the Cliff; and a carriage was or-



"FIFTY SON OF SORROW IS THE BROTHER OF AKAH'S SISTER, AND OVER A DAUGHTER + MISFORTUNE SHALL BE HER SISTER"

dered from Cromer to convey Agatha, her attendants, and what part of her luggage she chose to take with her, to her new residence; and all this was speedily arranged by the fisher, who, again entering Agatha's apartment, beheld her seated between the two boys, as if, indeed, she was actually the sister of them, and they appeared evidently delighted in sharing the kind attentions of their lovely protectress; and the fisher exclaimed, on perceiving the rugged countenance of his little friend greatly softened of its inflexible expression,—

“Why, shiver my top-sails! I believe Miss Singleton, that you are a witch,—a very witch! and that you have the power of enchanting every one who comes near you. So, my little fellow, you are now come to your senses, and have told this young lady what you refused to tell me.” To which Wolf, immediately running up to him, and giving the fisher his hand, replied,—

“But I did not then know how much I was obliged to you, but my sister has told me all about it, and I am no longer afraid of you, and I will fight for you, if you will let me. I told my pretty sister how well I could fight; I am very fond of fighting; Jack showed me how to fight when I was on board of the ship, and I have never forgotten it.”

The fisher by turns surveyed the countenance of Agatha, and that of little Wolf, but without being able to resist from laughter, and soon being informed why he had laid claim to Miss Singleton as his sister, and every particular he had related to her, of the manner he had been treated in the Black Forest, of the cruelty of the man and woman in whose hands he had fallen, and of the protection and kindness of the honest Jack Tar, who had so unfortunately perished in the sea, the fisher expressed the greatest astonishment; no longer entertaining a doubt but the boy had either been secreted by these perfidious wretches, for some nefarious and wicked purpose, or that he had been deserted by the authors of his being, who, however illustrious or great, had brought him forth in shame, and left him to a wild and merciless world for protection, or what was even more to be dreaded, had employed persons either to destroy him, or conceal the origin of his birth; at all events, it was very clear that the boy was neither the offspring of

the woman nor the man, from the sentences which had escaped from the lips of the latter, when, as Wolf expressed it, he was lying in a state of inebriety, and that he knew who were the parents of the child was certain, and for what purpose he was concealed was as probable, but that mystery had now thrown an impervious veil over these circumstances, which it was very unlikely would ever be removed, except by the miraculous assistance of divine interposition; the fisher was aware, as he had no clue to discover what part of Denmark the ship had sailed from, or where the forest was situated that the boy had spoken of, as being the place in which these barbarians had so long secreted him; and he was almost as much in the dark about the history of his young companion for Alfred could give no further account of himself than, that his father was the captain of the ship in which he had sailed, previous to which he had been taken from an academy, where he had been placed for his education, and which was very far distant from Denmark; that he had never known any other home but this; that he had never beheld his mother, and did not know that he had any relative living that belonged to him; that when at the academy he only saw Captain Alfred, who said he was his father, once in the year, and then he brought him presents and clothes, and paid all his expences, till the ensuing year came round again.

"And do you not know the name of the person who kept this academy, my dear little fellow?" demanded the fisher, viewing the fine handsome features of the little narrator with peculiar kindness; to which he replied,—

"His name was Stoddart, Sir, one of them, (for there were two masters,) and the other was called Sebastian; he was a foreigner, a Spaniard, I believe, and used to teach us foreign languages; he taught us French and Italian, and the use of the globes; but I liked Stoddart best, because he was an Englishman, and so was my father."

"Shiver my top-sails! if your father was any the better for that," cried the fisher; "there's good and bad in all countries, my fine fellow, and England has no more right to boast of superiority in this respect than any other; but it don't matter what country we belong to, as long as we perform our duty to enable us

to journey to that where we must all meet, every mother's son of us, whether we are princes, peasants, or slaves, and where no distinction will be made, except in the degrees of how we have merited a title, or deserved a place there; so, my dear boy, not knowing whether you were born rich or poor, you must e'en rank with your fellow-sufferer there; and shake hands with each other, for he is now your brother in the calamity by which you are both, it is very probable, orphans; but be thankful that you are not unprotected ones, but have fallen into hands that will take charge of you, and henceforth, Alfred and Wolf, ye shall both be the sons of Fisher Blust; and, if you are good boys, shiver my top-sails! if ever you shall have reason to lament the hour that Providence threw you on this coast for protection. Come, I am now going to take you to another home, where too, you will find some more sisters, besides this young lady, to keep you company."

"And how many, pray, Sir?" demanded Wolf, with some anxiety depicted in his countenance.

"Two," answered the fisher; "I have two daughters, much about the same age as Miss Singleton."

"And are they both so beautiful, and good tempered as she, said Wolf? and do they look so much like an angel?"

"Shiver my topsails!" answered the fisher, now laughing heartily, "but if you had numbered more years, boy, you would be a pretty sort of chick to take roost with my girls; but come, there is little danger at the present moment, and you shall tell me at Herring Dale which of your sisters is most to your mind, for you are one of those, I perceive, who will not be over fond of much ceremony. Come, Wolf; you must bear me company; Alfred must go in the carriage with Miss Singleton, because he is not so well able to walk as you."

Wolf, on these words, darted a look at Agatha, and instantly springing to her side, caught hold of the skirt of her gown, and resolutely persisted that he would not leave her behind him.

"But she is going also," cried the fisher; "you will see her again in a few moments."

"And why may I not go with her as well as Alfred?" answered Wolf, "she called me brother first, so I will be the last to leave
No. 5.

her ;—I will never leave her ; beat me, if you please, but indeed, indeed, father, I will never leave my sister !”

“ I will make room for Wolf, if you please, Sir,” cried Agatha, unable to resist the growing partiality she felt for the boy.

“ Well, but, my dear, you will be so crowded, all jostled up together in one chaise !” said the fisher.

“ Well, but I don’t mind that, Sir,” rejoined Agatha, anxiously ; “ let Wolf have his way, this once, I implore you !”

“ Implore me, Miss Singleton !” cried the fisher, surprised at the emotion which her countenance so earnestly betrayed, “ and for the sake of that boy, do you find it already necessary to implore me ? well, well, be it so, if you wish it ; let Wolf this once, at your request, have his way ; but, in future, he must not expect such foolish indulgence, or that I will suffer you to be annoyed thus on every occasion with his perverse behaviour.”

“ He will be more tractable in time,” answered Agatha mildly, and blushing deeply, that perhaps she had betrayed more anxiety for the little wanderer than her own forlorn and dependent situation warranted.

Meanwhile Wolf, having gained his point, sat a silent spectator of the preparations which were making for their departure, without being conscious of any sensation but of joy, that he was not to be separated from his lovely sister, whose countenance he incessantly watched with the most vigilant earnestness ; and when she quitted the room with Claribelle for a few minutes, to inspect such articles as she wished to be removed from the Cliff with the luggage, which Shelly was assisting David to put into a cart, he eagerly pursued her to the door, till she was obliged gently to reprove him.

“ Wolf, you must not follow me where I am going,” cried she ; “ It is improper, and it is indelicate ; remember where you are, I beg of you, or you will greatly offend your protector ; he likes not forward behaviour, nor do I : if you wish that I should regard you as my brother, you must deserve it, by attending to my instructions ; then, I will return in a few moments.—Sit down by Alfred, till the fisher calls you.”

Wolf immediately obeyed, and during the absence of Miss Sin-

leton, began conversing with his companion about their departure from the Cottage on the Cliff.

"I am glad I am going from this frightful place, are not you, Wolf?" cried Alfred: to which Wolf replied,—

"Yes, but I don't mind it much; I have had plenty of victuals to eat, and a nice soft bed to sleep on, and nobody to beat me, and such a beautiful lady to speak to, and I would not care if I stayed here all my life, if she was with me;—don't you love her, Alfred?"

"Yes, very much;—she is very kind; but we are going to see some more sisters, and they may be as kind as her, and then, you know, it would be very ungrateful if we did not love them too, because our protector is their father; he has told us that our other sisters are his daughters."

"I don't care who his daughters are, not I," answered Wolf; "for may I be beat twenty-times a day, if ever I shall love them half as well as I do her!"

"Do not say that, Wolf, pray don't," cried Alfred, "or you may chance to make the fisher angry."

"Well, let him be so, an' he will," answered Wolf, gruffly, "but I will say it, if I please, for all that, and he may beat me. I always said what I pleased to Ronaldo, and will say so still."

"Well, but what a pleasant life we shall lead at the house of our father," rejoined Alfred, wishing to change the subject of their discourse; for Alfred never could contend with Wolf on any point in which he chose to take the lead, though conscious of his superiority of birth, and the different manner in which they had been brought up; "to have lovely fields to walk in, with such pretty sisters by our side, and to breathe the odour of the fresh-blooming flowers; to hear the birds sing so sweetly all the while, instead of being shut up in this dreary place, where we can hear nothing but the roaring of the sea, the beating of the waves against the rocks, and the frightful howling of the winds."

"Which I have been used to hear in the Black Forest so long," cried Wolf, "that I do not at all mind it; besides, I love to gaze on the sea and see the proud waves, that can come no further, if they had ever such a mind, unless God pleases. Jack used to

read books, and tell me who made man, and what God can do, and man cannot do ; so I am not afraid of man, for he can do me no harm, if God does not permit him, and Jack told me that he never would while I prayed to him for protection, and so I do, Alfred, night and morning ; in the Black Forest I never heard God mentioned, but now that I know what he is, I will never, never forget him !” To which Alfred replied, apparently much struck by the unexpected and rational discourse of his young companion,—

“ Well, Wolf, I am glad to hear you say so, for I have been taught to know what God is too ;—but—but I am ashamed to say that my tutor did not read so many books about him as Jack did to you ; but I learned fine languages, French and Italian, and the names of great heroes, and kings, and conquerors, that were born a hundred years ago, and fought in battles, and died in battles. There was Alexander the Great, he was a great hero, Wolf !”

“ I know what he was as well as you do, Alfred,” cried Wolf, a little disdainfully.

“ You, Wolf ! no, you mistake !” retorted Alfred, half smiling at his petulance.

“ Then how should I know that he was the most presumptuous man living ?” uttered Wolf, “ who commanded the waves to stop, and the winds to stand still, because he was so ambitious as to imagine that he had the power ; but did either the winds or the waves obey him ? answer me that ; no, Alfred, I can tell you that they did no such thing, and that Alexander, as great a heathen as he was, could not move them one bit ; for these elements were both made by the hands of God, and his hands only can rule over them.”

“ And did your friend Jack teach you all these things, Wolf ?” cried Alfred, quite confounded and astonished that the little wanderer of the Black Forest was almost in possession of as much learning as himself.

“ Yes,” answered Wolf, “ and a great deal more such things than I have time to tell you now, but when we go to our father’s, Alfred, I will let you know all that Jack has taught me.”

“ Ah ! then I am ashamed of my learning, since it has taught

me to know so little," cried Alfred, "and you know so much without any learning at all."

"Jack said, learning did not make great men, but great actions," said Wolf; "and that actions could never be called truly great, unless they were truly good ones; now if I had strength to go and pull down this great house, for instance, you know, Alfred, why, it might be said that I had done a great action; but you could never persuade people that I had done a good one."

The idea of Wolf pulling down a house occasioned Alfred to laugh heartily, and at this very precise moment the entrance of Miss Singleton, Claribelle, and the fisher, put an end to their discourse. David was already despatched with the cart, and Sheltie was to remain in the cottage, with two of the neighbouring fishermen, till proper persons could be found to take charge of the household furniture, and to reside in the house, till it could be let to a tenant whose wish might be to live in so retired and solitary spot, and of which there was a chance, as the sea-bathing season was rapidly approaching; when strangers, of all characters and description, were in the habit of visiting Cromer, and continuing there for some length of time; and in the probability that the cottage could not be tenanted, it was already so improved and modernized in its present appearance, from its former ruinous condition, that if Miss Singleton wished to dispose of it entirely off her hands, there was no doubt of her finding a purchaser, although so solitary a retreat; for there were many, who, like its former possessor, might make choice of it in preference to any other.

There was a depression on the spirits of Agatha as she prepared to quit this abode, which had also been that of her beloved father, which, in spite of the kindness of the fisher, she could not easily shake off; and when Claribelle locked the doors of the chambers which they had so lately inhabited, and in which they had passed so many quiet and tranquil hours, she heaved a pensive sigh, as she exclaimed,—

"I shall miss the little robin, whom I fed every morning with crumbs of bread from my window; poor fellow, he will want my assistance, and perhaps will perish, or wing his flight to some more

genial sky!" To which Claribelle replied, and quickly hurrying her young mistress away from the apartment,—

"There are more robins besides the one you have seen here, my dear young lady, and you have too much good sense to let such trifles give you any uneasiness; you will see plenty of robins at Herring Dale, which Shelly tells me is one of the most beautiful and romantic situations you can imagine."

"But no more fathers!" uttered Agatha, bursting into an involuntary flood of tears; "I shall have no father to greet me on my arrival there; and perhaps no friend, save alone the kind-hearted fisher! Alas, Claribelle! how wretched is the lot of that child who has neither father nor mother left in this wide world to care for its wayward destiny!"

"And yet it is the lot of millions, my dear Miss Agatha, with not half your advantages," rejoined Claribelle; "reflect on that, and do not suffer despondency to chase from your mind the enlivening ray, which hope always lends to the afflicted. Come, dear miss, my heart grieves to see you thus, indeed it does; consider that Mr. Blust is waiting below in the parlour all this while, and the chaise is already drawn up to the avenue: come, Miss Agatha, lean on my arm, and try to compose yourself."

Agatha did so, but it was an effort that required some resolution, and, hastily turning her eyes from the contemplation of objects so painfully acute to her recollection, she drew her veil over her face, and met the fisher, just as he was on the point of coming to seek her.

"My dear, I do not wish to hurry you," cried he, "but the hour is growing late, and my girls are most anxiously expecting you at Herring Dale. There is the young Wolf too, quite impatient at your stay."

The door of the parlour now flew wide open, and the head of Wolf obtruded itself on their gaze, while every feature glowed again with joy at sight of his lovely sister.

"What do you wear that black curtain over your face for?" inquired he; "it is so pretty, that I love to look at it whenever I have a mind; but I know what you look like now; I can tell, though I never learned the use of the globes in all my life."

"Shiver my topsails!" cried the fisher, laughing immoderately, for it was almost impossible to resist it; "but you are a cleverer fellow than I took you for, after all; and now tell us, you young rogue, what is Miss Singleton like? come, I am anxious to know." To which Wolf immediately replied,—

"Why, now she has got that dingy curtain over her pretty face, she is like the moon when it gets behind a dark cloud, but it shines as bright as ever when it is gone by, and so will she, when the curtain is taken off; her eyes are just like two stars, are they not, Sir?"

The fisher laughed heartily. "Why, I must own, there is some resemblance;" uttered he, and bidding Shelly open the door of the chaise, he gave his hand to Agatha, and, having placed her in it, packed the rest of the party wherever they could bestow themselves without incommoding Miss Singleton, and telling the coachman instantly to drive on as rapidly as he could, in a few moments they were completely out of sight of the Cottage on the Cliff.

CHAPTER X.

"Peace be within thy walls!
And plenteousness within thy palaces!
For thou hast given shelter to the fatherless,
And comforted the heart of the afflicted."

IN less than an hour the travellers arrived at the dwelling of the fisher, and the very instant that the chaise stopped at the gateway, Jessy and Olive ran out to welcome their lovely guest; for the latter had now no alternative, but of counterfeiting an air of kindness towards the unfortunate daughter of Captain Singleton; so much had been said and urged on this subject by Jessy and her father, that at present there was no chance of acting in opposition to their wishes, and Olive was too proud, and too conscious of her own personal attractions, to have it suspected that she was envious of the charms of another, and, from all others, she wished to con-

ceal such a mean and unworthy sentiment from Leontine Craftly, who was too generous himself not to utterly despise those who cherished it; and therefore Olive contrived to dress her countenance in the sweetest smile of affability, on the entrance of Agatha Singleton to her father's dwelling, for the moment that she had alighted from the chaise, she took her hand, and gave her the warm embrace of sisterly affection, while she preserved an air of equal kindness and condescension to her attendant, but she scarcely noticed the poor boys; but leaving Jessy to take charge of them in the best manner that she was able, insisted on taking Miss Singleton immediately into the apartments which had been prepared for her reception, "where, you know, you will be entirely at liberty to do as you think proper, Miss Singleton," uttered Olive, as she assisted in removing the large veil, bonnet and shawl, which so completely disguised the lovely features and bewitching form of her beauteous guest; but when she did so, Olive was struck with the pallid hue, and dignified yet placid expression, which too perceptibly betrayed the agitation of the unhappy orphan, who, bursting into tears, acknowledged how much she felt obliged by the many marks of kindness and humanity which had been manifested toward her.

"Oh, say nothing about that, pray, Miss Singleton," cried Olive, entreating that she would sit down and compose herself, "for my sister Jessy and I are quite happy, I assure you, at having a young lady like you beneath our roof, one, who, my father says will be a pride and a comfort to us, and who will teach us so many things that we do not know." To which Agatha modestly replied,—

"And it will give me great pleasure, my dear Miss Blust, to afford you any assistance that the utmost of my poor ability can extend to, but to instruct others, I am not so vain to imagine that I am able; secluded being that I was, within the walls of a convent, I know but little of the customs or manners of a more general or polished society, and were I to talk of a world that I did not know, or boast of a knowledge that I did not possess, it would be ridiculous indeed!"

There was not only a modesty, but a frank ingenuousness in this speech, which was so free from the slightest tincture of affecta-

tion, that even Olive was not insensible to its attraction, for it must have charmed and penetrated the coldest and most obdurate heart, to admire and respect the character of the lovely object before them.

But there are hearts not to be penetrated, even by the influence of what is most amiable and praiseworthy : there are hearts, on which virtue itself, though arrayed in its most lovely form, can make no impression.

And this was nearly the case with Olive Blust ; she would not have allowed any merit to Agatha, or even admired her, if there had been a possibility of avoiding it ; and that excellence must be great indeed which can even extract praise from envy, which freely never bestows it, and she exclaimed,—

“ Bless me, Miss Singleton ! and were you really brought up in a convent, among a parcel of nuns ? but perhaps you were intended for a nun ; indeed you look something like one in that black dress : it is vastly becoming, for you have certainly a beautiful shape ! ”

Without noticing a compliment so unfeelingly and indelicately addressed to her at the present moment of her misfortunes, Agatha mournfully replied,—

“ It is a dress, Miss Blust, which, had it pleased Heaven, I should have been most happy to have dispensed with, on so melancholy an occasion as the death of my poor father ; nevertheless, it bears no resemblance to that of a nun, for which, as you wish to be informed, I never was intended. Nuns do not always wear black, but are attired in habits peculiar to the order of their convent ; but I was placed in one merely as a boarder, and to receive my education, the same as I should have done had I been sent to any seminary in England.”

“ Indeed ! ” cried Olive, expressing some astonishment, and feeling every moment the superiority of one whom she would have been very willing to have considered beneath her ; “ well, I protest, I did not know that before ! for I thought that every one who went to live in a convent was obliged to be a nun, whether they liked it or not, and that they were burnt to death if they persisted in refusing to become one.”

“ Thank Heaven, there is no compulsion of so horrible a nature
No. 5.

in days like these," exclaimed Agatha, "nor did I ever hear an instance of the kind you mention but one, and the story is now almost become obsolete, from its very great improbability."

"Well, I am very glad to hear it," returned Olive, as she slyly glanced at a mirror which was opposite to her, and which reflected nearly the whole of her beautiful figure; for "none but women that are old and ugly, in my opinion, should be ever nuns; neither you nor I, Miss Singleton, would belong to that class, I am very sure, so let us now hasten down stairs, as I think the dinner is near ready, and my father is no doubt returned from the Cliff by this time, and will be inquiring for you; he will be quite anxious to know how you like your new habitation at Herring Dale, and the apartments that my sister Jessy and I have been at such pains to decorate for your reception."

"And which I am so much obliged to you and your sister Jessy for," cried Agatha, as she arose to follow the steps of her conductress, "that I am unable to express my gratitude; while to your worthy, your excellent father, my obligation is boundless."

At this moment the cheerful voice of the fisher, who had just arrived, rung through the hall; he had uttered something that had occasioned a loud and general burst of laughter, and that of the young Wolf was distinguishable above them all.

"There is Wolf laughing," cried Agatha. "That strange, unaccountable boy, do you mean?" inquired Olive; "I am told that he is a perfect little savage, to all but you, Miss Singleton, and that even my father could not manage him till you had tamed him."

"And who has been giving you so unfavourable an impression of poor Wolf?" demanded Agatha, in so peculiar a voice and manner, that it immediately crimsoned the cheeks of Olive with a colour of the brightest crimson, and she hesitated in pronouncing what was really the truth, that it was Leontine Craftly who had told her the history of her father's little adopted sons, at least all that he knew of it, and which the fisher had himself related to him, the moment he received it from the lips of Agatha, and Leontine having called at Herring Dale on his pretty kinswomen on his way home, when he quitted the Cottage on the Cliff, had amused Olive and Jessy with a humorous description of the manners and beha-

viour of the little wanderer of the Black Forest ; at which Olive laughed excessively, protesting that when he became an inhabitant of Herring Dale, that the whimsicality of the little urchin would afford her a fund of amusement. To which observation Leontine had answered,—

“ Yes, if you can get him to come near you.”

“ Why, he wont bite, will he ?” cried Olive, laughing.

“ No, but he will snarl,” answered Leontine ; “ he snarls and snaps at every body but Miss Singleton ; even your father could not manage him, till she had rendered him something tractable.”

Olive’s good humour instantly faded from her countenance ; she frowned, bit her lip, and remained quite silent till the departure of her cousin Craftly ; it was no wonder, therefore, that she blushed and felt embarrassed at this question being put to her ; by the very object who alone had excited her envy and jealousy ; it was necessary, however, to disguise these sensations at the present moment, and, with affected carelessness, she replied,—

“ It was only our kinsman Craftly that told Jessy and I of the little boy’s irregular behaviour, and extraordinary disposition.”

“ Of which Mr. Craftly could know but little,” retorted Agatha, colouring, but unconscious that she did so, while pleading the cause and extenuating the faults of her young favourite ; “ and as to his manners, what can be expected of a poor child, deserted by the authors of its being, and reared in a forest, with wretches little short of savages, whose intention very probably was that of murdering the boy had he not been so miraculously preserved by the humanity of a stranger, and fled from their pursuit.”

Olive was silent, for Craftly had also related all these particulars, and had made similar excuses for the uncouth and uncivilized manners of the little refugee ; but Olive did not choose to say so, for the deep blush which had so suddenly overspread the beautiful features of Agatha had not escaped the observation of Olive, but which her jealous fears attributed to a very different cause than the pure source from whence it had sprung, and, with a less air of kindness, she continued to converse with her, till they reached the door of the apartment in which the fisher was sitting ; but Jessy was not there, and neither were the two boys, but the cloth was

laid, and every preparation was going forward for dinner ; and on the entrance of Miss Singleton, the fisher arose, and cordially shaking her by the hand, welcomed her with much kindness to her present abode.

" Here you are, Miss Singleton, at Herring Dale," uttered he, " safely anchored in comfortable moorings ; and, shiver my top-sails, if any gale shall overset your boat again, while Peter Blust stands at the helm of it ! Well, my dear, how have my girls treated you ?—Jessy told me how main glad she was to see you ; and Olive, I perceive, has had the most of your company since your arrival,—she has been showing you the chambers I intend for your use and your maid, Mistress Claribelle, and pray tell me how you like them,—they are quite snug and comfortable, bean't they now ?"

" They are, indeed, Sir, all that I could wish, and much more than I have a right to expect," replied Agatha, much affected by the unexampled kindness of her generous and benevolent protector ; " may heaven reward you, for all the kindness you have bestowed on one whose gratitude toward you can never end but with existence ?"

" Nonsense, my dear, nonsense," cried the fisher, regarding her lovely eyes, which were humid with a tear ; " let me hear no more about that, I beg of you : I have done nothing more than my duty, and want no further reward than that which your smiles can afford me, when I behold you happy beneath a roof which I now hope you will consider as your own. Olly, go, my girl, and see if the dinner is not forthcoming. Shiver my top-sails ! I could swallow a mainmast, or snap up a whale, I am so very sharp-set ; when the wind blows easterly, I have always an excellent appetite."

Olive disappeared ; and the fisher, turning to Agatha with some symptoms of curiosity, as well as anxiety, blended in his countenance, exclaimed, in a sort of under tone,—

" Well, and how dost like my girls ?—Jessy is a darling, isn't she ? Olly, too, is a fine wench, isn't she ?—They are both well enough for the daughters of a fisher, are not they, Miss Singleton ?"

Agatha was about to reply something, but she did not know what, when, fortunately for her, the dinner at this moment was set

on the table, and it was immediately followed by the entrance of the whole group, Olive, Jessy, Alfred and Wolf, for whom, as soon as they were seated, Agatha felt greatly in fear, that he would not conduct himself in an orderly and becoming manner; but the dove-like eyes of the sweet Jessy had some how or other followed the direction of Agatha's, and perceiving that they were bent on little Wolf, she immediately contrived to station him beside her, to the no small joy of the one, and the entire satisfaction of the other; for Agatha watched him incessantly, and several times had occasion to reprove him for the greedy impatience he exhibited, and the haste with which he swallowed up the dainties which were set before him, at which the fisher sometimes laughed so heartily, as well as Olive, that, unconscious why she did so, Miss Singleton frequently blushed at the awkward manners of the little rustic, because those of his young companion were so widely opposite; for Alfred behaved at table as if he had been accustomed to the habits of polished society, and taught the lesson of good breeding, the distinguishing characteristic of which is difficult to be obtained, except by a constant intercourse with persons of delicacy and refinement.

The youngest daughter of Fisher Blust seemed as if she was designed by heaven alone to form the happiness and constitute the blessing of all around her; for the very moment that she perceived that Wolf was an object of particular solicitude to Miss Singleton, she endeavoured, by every means in her power, to prevent his committing those little blunders and mistakes which appeared to give Agatha so much uneasiness, by frequently handing him what she thought he liked best, and, whenever the eyes of her father or Olive were turned from him, to whisper softly in his ear, in the most good-humoured manner,—

“ Make use of the napkin to wipe your hands, and not the tablecloth, my dear boy, and do not eat your victuals so fast. There is plenty of time for you to partake of every thing you see here; and no one will hurry you, if you will have patience.”

“ But I am hungry,” cried Wolf, aloud; and, without seeming at first to regard her injunctions, was beginning to tear his victuals to pieces without mercy, when Agatha, perfectly shocked at his behaviour, forbade him to do so sharply:—

"If you do that again, you shall not sit here, Wolf," cried she, "and I will no longer keep your company; do you know where you are, ungrateful and unmanly boy, that you eat thus, like a savage and a bear?—recollect yourself, you are not now in the Black Forest, with Ronaldo, or the woman who has taught you such unseemly manners; you are sitting at the table with goodly company, and in the presence of your benefactor, and if you do not treat him with respect, and also these young ladies, who are so kind to you, I will never more speak to you, nor will I any longer permit you to call me your sister,—I will be no sister, nor even friend, to one who so far forgets what is due to his superiors."

CHAPTER XI.

"The purest treasure mortal times afford,
Is—spotless reputation; that away.
Men are but gilded loam, or painted clay.
A jewel, in a ten times barr'd-up chest,
Is—a bold spirit in a loyal breast."

THE effect of this speech was almost instantaneous on the feelings of little Wolf, as it not only produced a speedy reformation, but acted like a charm for the future on the hardy disposition and rough manners of the forest boy, insomuch that he never more offended on the like occasion, but cautiously avoided every opportunity of giving the slightest displeasure to his pretty sister, for so he always called Miss Singleton. Jessy, too, shared some of his attention; but it was very evident that Wolf did not like Miss Blust, and it was as plain that she did not like him; for only two days after his arrival at Herring Dale, Wolf offended Olive, by making an observation on the beauty of her sister Jessy, for which he never more basked in the sunshine of the smiles of Miss Blust, nor ever was a favourite with her afterwards, and this offence was actually occasioned by the fisher himself, who one day, when his daughters were dressed more than usual, in order to accompany Miss Singleton, to return a tea-visit to their kinswoman, Margaret

Craftily, who had given a very cordial and pressing invitation to the lovely orphan, at the sly suggestion of her brother, though Margaret cautiously avoided saying so ; and it was just as they were all assembled at dinner, that the fisher suddenly exclaimed,—

“ Well, Mr. Wolf, you are looking very hard at your sisters.”

“ It is because I like to look at every thing that is pretty,” answered he, “ and why may I not make use of my eyes, pray ? but I don’t think *all* my sisters pretty, for all that, though Alfred does.”

“ Indeed !” cried the fisher, “ you are always differing in opinion from Alfred, and you stand on very little ceremony in letting us know it.”

“ Well, what harm was there in saying what I did to Alfred ?” cried Wolf ; “ he said what he pleased to me, and so did I to him, and it was all about Morning, Noon and Night, for so I have called my three sisters. In the first place, there is Morning : it is light and rosy, when the weather is fine, and so is my sister Jessy ; her eyes are so blue and so clear, and so lively, and she has such pretty light hair,—so I named her Morning, because she always put me in mind of it. Then comes Noon, you know, which is brighter still, because the sun shines then with ten thousand times more light, and it is so beautiful, that it often dazzles our eyes ; but then it makes us feel so warm and so comfortable, that no one can help admiring and wondering at its charms, and that is just what I feel whenever I look at Miss Singleton,—so I named her Noon, because I like noon better than morning. Well, last of all comes Night, which is dark and frowning, and so is my sister Olive there,—though Alfred will have it that she is more beautiful than either of my sisters ; but I am sure I don’t think so, because she looks so cross.”

A silence of some minutes ensued, not much to the satisfaction of either of the parties, and it was particularly unpleasant to the feelings of Agatha and Jessy, who felt that they had no right to feel pleased or gratified at the compliments bestowed on them by the little forester, which had so many disadvantages on its side, as to mortify the pride of the indignant Olive, who, having shot at Wolf the most angry glances, demanded to know in no very gentle accents of her sister Jessy, if she was ready to go to her kinawo-

man's? "or, perhaps," added she, deeply colouring with resentment, "you had much rather stay and listen to the conversation of that rude, bold, and forward urchin, who thinks, because my father has given him a shelter beneath this roof, that he is at full liberty to insult every one with impunity; but let him beware how he presumes a second time to throw out his gibes and sneers at me, or I will make him dearly repent his insolence, I promise him; for it is neither my father, nor Miss Singleton, nor you, Jessy, that shall screen him from having what he so justly deserves,—a sound horsewhipping;" and, whisking her scarf about her, Olive flounced out of the room, and walked so rapidly, from the violence of the passion in which she had put herself, that she was almost in sight of her kinswoman's habitation before either Miss Singleton or Jessy could overtake her; for the fisher had no sooner heard the conclusion of Wolf's speech, than he had darted out of the room to conceal the loud bursts of laughter which he could no longer restrain; not that he wished the boy to be rude or uncivil in his language or manners to his eldest daughter, or that he would receive any toleration from him in future for so doing, but because he was absolutely astonished at the boy's singular address and effrontery, and the undaunted and whimsical manner he had in showing it; nor could the fisher but admit that there was truth in the figurative comparisons he had drawn, for it was seldom that a frown did not dwell on the countenance of Olive, and that a smile did not rest on that of the sweet Jessy, and they must be insensible indeed who could not be struck with the superior loveliness of Agatha Singleton; so that, taking all this into serious consideration, the fisher could not reasonably blame Wolf for the just discrimination he had displayed, though he had taken an improper time for discovering it; and he only waited till his girls were fairly out of sight before he returned to Wolf, in order to give him a necessary caution against offending Olive, by any of his rude and abrupt remarks or observations for the future, and found him by no means dismayed or intimidated by the threats with which he had been menaced, or conscious that he had been guilty of the slightest impropriety; and when the fisher prepared to approach him, with a stern and angry look, he exclaimed,—

"I always thought you looked like Jack, when you were in a good humour; he used to whistle like you, and drink grog like you, and hold his pipe just like you."

The fisher advanced a step or two further, and nothing relaxed in the stern frown he had with much difficulty curled round his broad, chubby face, that nature never made in an angry mood, and art could not invent for the life of her, yet he managed the following sentence to escape from his lips, which rather startled the young forester:—

"And suppose, Sir, that I were to resemble your friend Jack in the strength of my arm also, and brandish this stick about your shoulders, which you so richly deserve, for your insolence just now to my daughter, what would you say then?"

"Why, I should say that you and Jack were two then," cried Wolf, with a flushed cheek, and undaunted expression in his eye; "for Jack would never be guilty of so cowardly an action as to strike a poor boy, who could not return his blows again, and what's more never would, because you are his benefactor; but you may beat me if you please, I shall never flinch; it is not the first time that I have been beat for only telling the truth; but Jack used to say I should never mind that, for the smarting of the whip could not last but a very few moments, but that truth would last for ever: 'so,' says Jack, 'stick to truth, my boy, and that will shame the very devil.'"

We do not know by what instinct the fisher was moved so far (by the influence which this speech had upon his feelings) as to drop the stick, which he had brandished in his hand for some time, on the ground, and to smile with his usual kindness and complacency on the little undaunted forester, who, though certainly a diamond in the rough, had exhibited some strong traits of a disposition, spirited and noble, and yet so singularly eccentric, that he felt himself amused with even his audacity and his impudence; telling him, therefore, that he would this once look over his indiscretion, if he would amend in future his manners to Miss Blust, and behave with civility to her, the fisher again became on the most friendly terms with his strange little protégée, and, shaking hands with him before he set out for his kinsman's, gave orders to

David to take Wolf and his companion a pleasant walk round the neighbourhood of Cromer, and amuse them with such objects as he thought would be most likely to entertain and please them ; with which injunction of his worthy master, David cheerfully complied, and the fisher journeyed on to the mansion of his cousin Craftly, in his usual jog-trot manner, musing on the behaviour of the little wild urchin he had taken beneath his roof, who was likely to produce some unpleasant disturbances in his hitherto quiet and peaceable family, if he did not speedily adopt some other method of chastisement with him than that of brandishing a cane over his shoulders, for which he had plainly told him that he did not care ; and though the warm-hearted fisher could not but acknowledge that he was far better pleased with this hardihood in the boy, than had he betrayed signs of cowardice or fear, yet he was also sensible that so forward a colt would soon require the bit and the bridle, or he might one day chance to overthrow his riders ; he resolved, therefore, to consult with Leontine Craftly and Sam Russel the very next morning, about what sort of a plan he should pursue with Wolf, and to appease his daughter Olive for the present, by telling her that he had severely lectured him for the impertinence he had been guilty of toward her, for which he seemed sorry, and had promised to amend ; and that if he did not, he would send him from Herring Dale immediately, and place him under the hands of a rigid master in the neighbourhood of Cromer ; and, while these reflections engaged the mind of the fisher, not more pleasing ones had filled the bosom of each fair guest, on their arrival at the house of Miss Margaret Craftly, who arose to receive them with her accustomed kindness and urbanity, giving to Miss Singleton, of course, being the greatest stranger, the most particular welcome ; she then returned to Olive and Jessy, and saluted them both affectionately, while she exclaimed,—

“ Well, dear girls, and how do you both find yourselves ?—well and heartily, I am sure, for you both look charmingly,—yet, let me look again,—I am near-sighted, you know, my dears—so, so,—now I see clearly——” Margaret had recourse to her spectacles, to help the defect of which she complained, and was now placing them on her forehead, while she perused the countenances

ces of her lovely kinswomen with the nicest and most exact attention, when the frowning brow of the offended and still pouting Olive coming in contact with the fair, open and smiling one of Jessy's, the surprised Margaret added; "No,—I cannot see clear, though I have put on my spectacles."

"And pray, cousin, what do you want to see, that you examine me so very particularly?" demanded Olive, somewhat tartly.

To which her kinswoman, smiling, replied,—

"To see how the sun looks under a cloud, my dear; or, in other words, my spectacles misled me, for I fancied that I discerned an angry frown in my pretty Olive's face, that I have been mistaking for a smile;—that is all, my dear, but we are all liable to mistakes of one kind or another, so that you must pardon me, my love."

But this time the good-natured Margaret was not to succeed in restoring her kinswoman to her usual temperament; for Olive not only continued to frown, but to repeat the cause of it, to which she did not fail to add some embellishments of her own, by no means in favour of the little forester; and when she had sufficiently enlarged on the culprit's behaviour, she demanded of Margaret if she did not think that the audacious boy should be severely punished for his insolence?

"In proportion to the enormity of his crime, do you mean, my love?" answered Margaret, and smiled, for, stealing a glance that moment at Jessy's laughing eye, she could not help it.

"Which you, probably, think does not entitle him to any, cousin Craftly," retorted the disappointed Olive, finding that she was losing ground, instead of having gained it, in Margaret's opinion.

"I say nothing, my dear," replied Margaret, "and could wish, indeed, that you had not said quite so much, on a subject which I do not at all understand, therefore we will drop it, if you please. I love to see my friends happy, when I invite them to my house, and I am certain they cannot be so while their minds are occupied, and their attention called off by unpleasing retrospection; banish them, dearest Olive, at least while you remain the guest

of Margaret Craftily, for you well know that she is an avowed enemy to all gloom and melancholy."

"And so, cousin Craftily, you do not think that the boy behaved at all rude to me?" cried the now more highly enraged Olive, by no means moved by the friendly hints which Margaret had given her, and still obstinately persisting in a subject so disagreeable to the feelings of an affectionate relative.

"My dear, I really have not time to think at all about it," answered Margaret; "I am going to order tea in this moment, and then we shall be more pleasantly engaged. Would that your father were come, Jessy, and then I protest that I should feel quite comfortable,—my brother, too, promised he would return at an early hour, on purpose to"—Margaret made a full stop, for Olive Blust had suddenly turned an inquiring eye full upon her, and she added, though with a little embarrassment, "to—to—play a hand at cards with us;—are you fond of cards, my dear Miss Singleton?"

To which Agatha replied, with that sweet and unaffected ingenuousness which invariably marked her character,—

"Were I to tell you, Madam, that I am wholly unacquainted with the use of them, you would think it strange; but nevertheless it is true,—I was never in any place where cards were played."

"But I hope you do not object to being instructed in the use of them, my love," rejoined Margaret, glad to be relieved, at last, from the insupportable conversation of Olive; "it is merely a harmless and cheerful amusement, when not converted into a species of gambling; I mean, my dear when people do not sit down with the determined and horrible intention of picking one another's pockets, too generally practised in most families of distinction, as if they could not invite their friends to partake of the delicacies which they set before them, without making them pay dearly for their entertainment. This, indeed, is a species of amusement (if it can be called such) which I should be very unwilling you should ever be initiated in, my dear; but when conversation becomes torpid, and flags, you cannot conceive how a pack of cards fills up the time."

“ Well, but Cousin Craftily, I have seen you play for money,” cried Olive, now happy that she had afforded her an opportunity for retaliation.

“ Never, Miss Olive—never,” answered Margaret, deeply colouring, “ not to my recollection.”

“ Then your memory happens not to be so retentive of a circumstance which every body else must remember,” answered the malicious girl, “ because, at the very last birth-day feast, save only one, when you and Miss Pen Clutterbuck were partners at quadrille, how it amused the whole company to hear you snarl and snap at each other, just like two she-dragons, both eager to grasp at the prize. Let me see,—there was about nineteen shillings standing in the pool, when, my heavens! what a contest there was between you,—how Miss Penny snapt, and how you snarled! We were just going down the middle of a dance, you know, Jessy, at the other end of the room, when the lucky card was thrown. Poor Miss Pen! I shall never forget her dismayed countenance, when she arose from the table; nor your joyous one, cousin Craftily, as you counted your winnings, and dropped them, one by one, into your purse,—how Jessy and I laughed!”

And so would Agatha, had not delicacy and good manners absolutely forbade her from indulging her mirth at the expence of poor Margaret, who blushed up to the very eyes; while Jessy, who felt for her good-humoured kinswoman, exclaimed, at the conclusion of Olive’s speech,—

“ I wish, Olive, you had not thought proper to couple me so often in your ridiculous and foolish oration; if I laughed it was because others did, but I am sure it was not at cousin Craftily.”

“ But you did laugh, Jessy, so what is the use of denying it?” cried Olive; “ and there was no harm neither; was there, cousin Craftily?”

“ None in the world, unless Miss Blust is disposed to make harm of it,” replied Margaret, with some little warmth.

“ Who, me? not I,” answered Olive, “ I would not be so malicious, cousin; only as we are all inclined to be so grave and so melancholy, I thought I would say something just to enliven us or so.”

"And which you have taken every possible means to prevent, Miss Blust," observed Margaret, coldly; "however, let it all pass as chaff before the wind; it can do me no harm, and you no good, but you will know better in time than to use weapons which inflict wounds, but cannot heal them."

The tea-things were at this moment brought in by a domestic, or probably the thread of this conversation would again have been resumed by the saucy Olive, were it only for the propensity which she invariably discovered to torment her fellow-creatures; for consider human nature how we will, we shall always observe a peculiar cast of mind distinguishing every part of it, a predisposing impulse almost in every breast, and it would be a vain task to attempt altering the work of the *Supremé Being*, and manufacturer of the whole; for though it would be very possible to destroy its effects, it would be utterly impossible to change its habitual constitution for any advantage: our tempers are born with us, they are cradled with us, and they continue with us to the end of our frail and mortal existence. It is true that the events of our maturer years are frequently suffered to pass without leaving any impression behind them, while those of our early youth are associated with our warmest feelings, and our most ardent and sanguine expectations because youth is a summer flower, and age a cold and withering one.

And it was a most seasonable relief to the feelings of some of the female party, when the fisher made his appearance, with *Leontine Craftly* at his heels, and his cheerful countenance was a sunny beam to the gloom which hung over them, like a cold and uncomfortable mist.

He offered some slight apology to his kinswoman for having kept her so long waiting; "but, shiver my topsails!" added he, "I did not think it had been so late by an hour and ten minutes, till I fell in with *Craftly*."

"Well, better late than never, kinsman," cried Margaret, as she sat down to commence her operations for tea-making; meanwhile *Craftly* had paid his compliments to the young ladies, and the fisher had taken care to draw Olive aside to inform her how severely he had chastised *Wolf* for his rough behaviour, at which she received so much satisfaction, that a smile at last succeeded

to the frown which had so long overshadowed her fair brow ; besides, Leontine had drawn a chair close to her's, and, excepting a very distant bow to Miss Singleton on his first entrance, had noticed her in no other particular manner, neither had he spoken to Jessy more than he did at any other time : she was the exclusive object of his attention ; and Olive, imagining also that she was the chief object of his attraction, began by slow and imperceptible degrees to recover her good humour, taking good care, however, that nobody should have any chance of edging in a word beside herself, or sharing any of those attentions from Craftly, which she claimed as her own.

During tea, the news of the town was discussed, and the arrivals talked of ; among which the fisher stated that there were several families of distinction, come for the sea-bathing, who had already taken furnished lodgings in the vicinity of Cromer."

"There will be a prodigious overflow of company this season, then, I dare say, kinsman," cried Margaret.

"Yes, the inhabitants of Cromer are likely to have a fine harvest," answered Peter, chuckling as he spoke ; "there was not a bed left, for chick nor fowl, last night, at the Star and Garter Inn, which is the place where all the quality take up their quarters ; and, shiver my top-sails ! if I don't think we shall have a chance of letting the Cottage on the Cliff to some of them, before we can cry Jack Robinson ! The highest bidder is the surest finder, you know, my dear Miss Singleton ; and as you have no sort of objection to the cottage being inhabited, why I will try whether I cannot clap fifty or sixty guineas into your pocket by these fine gentry. You won't be the worse for it, and they can well spare it ; they come down here to spend their money, and why shouldn't they !—they have plenty and it is much better circulated in the hands of the poor and the industrious, than squandered away at the gaming-table ; so I will write a bit of a bill, signifying that the Cottage on the Cliff is to be let, and stick it up to-morrow morning at the door of the public library."

"A most excellent plan, kinsman," observed Margaret ; "don't you think so, brother ?"

To which Craftly, who had been sitting for a few moments in a

sort of abstracted manner, as if his thoughts were wandering, and employed by some other subject, now, roused by the question which his sister had suddenly put to him, replied,—

“There cannot be a better, in my mind, nor one so likely to succeed. The cottage is in excellent repair, and is so delightfully situated, for those persons of a highly romantic and secluded disposition, and who prefer calm retirement to the noisy bustle of the busy town, that I should not in the least wonder, if, by the plan you are going to adopt, that a tenant will be found for it immediately,—that is, provided no idle reports have been spread about to its disadvantage.”

“Which the silly and the ignorant will only give credit to,” cried the fisher. “Shiver my top-sails! do you think any body in their senses will believe in apparitions, and such nonsensical tales?”

“And do you really think, kinsman,” cried Margaret, for the fisher had most unfortunately started her favourite topic, “do you truly think there was no truth in the young woman and the infant that were drowned there, just under the cliff; and who, when the wind blows in a certain quarter, has been heard singing there, with the baby in her arms?”

“And don’t you believe in the spots of blood that were found in the haunted chamber, father?” cried Olive shuddering.

“Spots of a fiddlestick’s end!” vociferated the fisher, perceiving that even the complexion of Agatha turned pale at the last mentioned circumstance; “do I believe that the bright silver moon is made of green cheese; or that fishes will swim without water?—do I believe that a lobster is made like a herring; or that a whale will sail upon a dolphin’s back, you silly young goose; and you, cousin Margaret,—you, too, who are old enough to know better,—you to listen to such gossip’s stories!”

“Well, but you know, kinsman, though one is old, one cannot stop up one’s ears to what people are ready to take their Bible oath of,” uttered Margaret, not much pleased with the last mentioned observations of honest Peter; “there certainly has been some colour for such a report.”

“Then it must be the colour of a fool’s head,” retorted the

fisher, "for a wise one would know better; for my part, I have been, at all hours and in all weathers, when the wind has blown north, south, east and west, sailing round the cliff, and under the cliff, and over the cliff, but deuce a bit of any ghost I ever encountered, but a poor sea-gull, or solitary wild fowl, who used to flap their wings about the edges of the boat, poor, starved-gutted rogues! for a morsel of something to eat. Ghosts, indeed! did you ever hear the like of these women, Craftily?—they would persuade a man out of his senses."

"To argue against a belief in apparitions would take a wiser head than mine, kinsman," answered Craftily; "for, absurd as it may appear, those of no ordinary intellect admit the possibility, and even the probability of their existence."

The fisher was silent; and Margaret, taking advantage of his silence, exclaimed,—

"And therefore, kinsman, it is evident that superstition, as it is called, is not confined to the vulgar, but that people of sense and education have been affected by it."

"Don't believe it, Margaret,—don't believe it. Shiver my top-sails! it is a confounded cracker. Miss Singleton, my dear, did you ever see a ghost in all your life?"

The manner in which this question was put by the fisher made it almost morally impossible to resist laughing; and Agatha replied,—

"No, Sir; nor can I at all conceive the mere existence of sound without matter possible, or that it can emanate from a being purely immaterial; but I had much rather decline entering on subjects so very much above my comprehension. I certainly have seen nothing of the kind since I became an inmate of the Cottage on the Cliff, though my ears have frequently been assailed by the reports you mention, and I had much difficulty in dispelling the influence of such reports on the mind of my attendant, Clari-belle,—nay, she has absolutely told me, that she had seen and heard things; but my poor father never would permit such conversation to be carried on in his hearing, or even in the house,—he had a particular aversion to any thing of the kind."

"Shiver my top-sails! and your father was in the right," cried
No. 6.

the fisher ; " and he was a sensible man, and you are a very sensible girl for following his example ;—so here's to the confusion of all ghosts and ghostesses, in a full bumper of brandy and water."

And the fisher swallowed off a large glass of his favourite mixture, which his kinswoman Margaret had taken care to set before him, well knowing that the moment he had drank his tea, he loved to enjoy his pipe and his grog, till the supper hour, which was to be filled up with conversation instead of cards, as Miss Singleton had discovered no inclination to be initiated into this agreeable practice of killing time, which she could always employ to much better advantage.

More general conversation now took place between the ladies ; Margaret's currant wine being introduced, and its qualities canvassed over, Jessy praised its excellent flavour, and acknowledged that it was greatly superior to her's ; Olive denied the fact : and Miss Singleton, who did not understand any thing about the matter, was entirely new to the occasion. Some excellent peaches, and other fruit were handed round by Craftly ; and it came to Miss Singleton's turn to take one, he selected it, and presenting it to her, exclaimed,—

" Let me recommend a smaller one to you, Madam ; they are generally of a finer quality than those of a larger size."

Agatha did as she was desired, and took the peach from the hand of Craftly, rather mechanically than from inclination ; but even this small mark of civility was highly offensive to Olive Blust, for she herself had made choice of a large peach, and Leontine had said nothing at all about it, and why should he be so solicitous in recommending one of a better kind to Miss Singleton more than to her or Jessy ?—and she frowned and bit her lip disdainfully, when the fruit was again handed round to her, refusing to take any more.

" Had you not better ?" cried Craftly : " the plums are very fine."

" Then you may eat them yourself," answered she, and turned away her head with a disdainful sneer, so perceptibly rude, that it could not escape the observation of her father ; and, highly provoked at her continued sullen frown, he exclaimed,—

“And what the dickens is the reason you don’t choose to take a plum, when you see every body else eating them?”

“Because I don’t choose,” answered Olive, tartly.

“Why, then, shiver my top-sails! let it alone,” cried the fisher, taking an extra whiff of his pipe, “for, of all the fishes that swim in the sea, thou art the oddest; but enjoy thy spleen, even till thou burst, thou little fintail, do,—there’s nobody minds thee. Come, Craftily, drink, boy, and let the hussy alone;—confound her, she is always blowing a gale somewhere, never contented but when she is kicking up a breeze.”

“If I don’t like plums, am I obliged to eat them, father?” cried Olive; “Jessy knows that they always disagree with me, don’t they Jessy?”

“Yes, indeed, father, they always have the effect of souring on her stomach,” cried Jessy, colouring like crimson, on perceiving that the eyes of Leontine were fixed on her, during the appeal made by her sister, with the tenderest emotions of something like compassion, if it could not be called love; but he as instantly withdrew them, the look having drawn a deep sigh from Jessy’s heart, which reached no ear but his alone.

“Well, well, if they don’t agree with her, that is another matter,” cried the fisher; “but, shiver my top-sails! if I did not think that they had soured her temper too!—well, now let’s to business, as the saying is; to-morrow, cousin Craftily, I shall want your assistance; you must come and take a snap at Herring Dale, and then we will take a walk to Cromer, and stick up the bill at Adam’s circulating library, where all the great folks go to read love-nonsense, and such like; then they will cast their eyes on the paper, and all hands will read what it says,—‘A Cottage on the Cliff to be let,’ cries one; ‘and a beautiful situation’ cries another; ‘delightfully romantic, and by the sea-side,’ says one; ‘I’ll have it,’ says another; so down it goes to them that will name the highest price; in they pop—take possession of it; some great lord, or some great lady, and in about six months after—pop goes fifty guineas into Miss Singleton’s pockets.”

“Well, and it would be something worth popping for, would it not, my dear?” cried Margaret, addressing herself to the silent and listening Agatha, who modestly replied,—

"You are all too kind, indeed, dear madam, to one who can never sufficiently repay the interest you are so good as to take in my unhappy destiny."

There was a tone in the voice of Agatha which was melody itself, for, whatever she said, vibrated on the heart; and whether Margaret Craftly thought Agatha particularly interesting at this moment we know not, but she certainly looked at her with peculiar admiration, while she exclaimed,—

"My dear, every body must feel interested about you that has the pleasure of knowing you, for you are exactly what every body could wish, but what is so seldom to be found."

"So she is, cousin Craftly, so she is," cried the fisher; "that is the most sensible remark you have made for a long time; and I wish that I could see some folks learn to copy her example."

The bonnets and scarfs were now loudly called for, as the hour was growing late; and though Margaret had declared that she had provided an excellent supper for her guests, it was with much difficulty that Peter could be prevailed on to stay and partake of it; yet the sound of roast ducks, swimming in gravy, and a dish of green peas, roused his attention; and Jessy, whispering in his ear, that she hoped he would not disappoint his kinswoman in the expectation of his staying to supper, the pipe was cheerfully resumed, the glass of grog replenished, and the bonnets and scarfs laid down again; after which, much general chit-chat took place: Margaret asked Miss Singleton how the ladies dressed in a convent, and Agatha, willing to oblige this amiable old maid in all her inquiries, began very accurately to describe the costume of the nuns, and then the novices and the boarders, and was interrupted in the very middle of her discourse, interesting only to the females, by the appearance of the roast ducks and a large dish of green peas.

"You shall finish the cap after supper my dear," cried Margaret.

"Shiver my top-sails, if she does though!" said Peter; "Zounds! have you no mercy on the dear girl, cousin Craftly! you have talked her now into a high fever about your cuffs and your ruffs, and your capes, and your furbelows."

"Why, lord, kinsman, we women must talk about something," cried Margaret, and smiled.

"That you must, Meg," answered the fisher, as he prepared to take his seat at the table; "and, when once you begin, the d—— himself cannot stop you!"

CHAPTER XII.

"Come, braid for me the simple tress,
That curls so wildly round thy brow;
Beneath whose arch of loveliness,
Thy bright blue eyes are beaming now;
And place this wreath of flowers there,
To form some emblems sweet for me;
I chose them, for I thought them fair,
But find them not so fair as thee."

On the return of the family party to Herring Dale very little conversation was exchanged on either side, and in a few moments they retired to their respective chambers, but not before the fisher had bade Miss Singleton good night in his usual kind manner, Jessy always following his example; but Olive, whose jealous fears had only lain dormant for a short time, was now again roused against an object, so pure, so innocent, and so spotless, that celestial angels might have been witnesses to all her actions, and still looked down with approving smiles; and the cold good-night and distant curtesy were neither unfelt by the lovely Agatha, or unnoticed by the sweet Jessy, the cause of which was too well known to her,—and painful and agonizing were the reflections of this amiable girl, when she considered how hopeless was the attachment which her sister had conceived for one whom she felt well convinced never could return it. That Olive loved in vain, she had long known; and that she herself was the object on whom Leontine Craftly had placed his affections, she was also fully sensible of, and her throbbing heart but too consciously confessed that such a conviction was not displeasing to her, though she vain-

ly tried to conceal the passion that triumphed in her heart, and she as vainly endeavoured to imagine that friendship had only found a place there, yet the little urchin-winged boy, who shoots at random quivers from his bow, had been too certain in his aim, when he glanced at poor Jessy, and she loved Leontine long before she was conscious of what nature were the sentiments with which he had inspired her ;—and it was a moment of indescribable anguish to the amiable and affectionate girl, when she was aware of the deep-rooted passion which had taken place in the bosom of her sister for her cousin Craftly, since Olive absolutely thought herself the mistress of his affections ; and it was also a source of no small regret to Jessy, that Miss Singleton was selected as the victim of her ill-grounded jealousy, the trifling attentions he had paid to her, and to which so excellent a creature was entitled from her exclusive merits, resulting from the purest motives of humanity, and the benevolence of his disposition ; and while these painful emotions filled the heart of Jessy, and kept her from enjoying her peaceful slumbers, not more pleasing ones occupied the mind of Agatha, as, in retiring to her chamber, she seriously turned her thoughts to the occurrences of the day, and there was more than one circumstance which had given her pain.

The conduct of her little favourite, who was likely to become a very disagreeable inmate in the house of the fisher, and for whom she felt a growing partiality, the nature of which she could not account for, occasioned her to feel a great share of uneasiness on his account, in the fear that he would in time weary out the patience and good humour of his benevolent protector, and by continually behaving rude to his eldest daughter, induce him at last to send the poor boy away from his friendly roof ; and what could her treaties then avail ?—if she pleaded for Wolf a second time, it would be thought that she wished to encourage him in the improper freedom he had taken with Miss Blust ; and if poor Wolf was banished from her sight, she felt that her abode at Herring Dale would be rendered extremely uncomfortable ; the cool manner, too, in which Olive had bade her good-night, and her previous conduct at the house of her amiable kinswoman, portended nothing very pleasing while she remained under the protection of

the fisher, as she could not but perceive that she was the object of her jealous fears respecting her cousin, Leontine Craftly, from whom she neither wanted, nor was at all ambitious of receiving any particular attentions other than common politeness demanded; for, though a very pleasing and prepossessing young man, still Agatha felt that he was greatly her inferior, and that her birth and education had taught her to look higher than to the son of a fisherman, even in the supposition that she was the object of his pursuit; but Agatha was not blind, and soon began to discover that the real object of this young man's repeated visits to Herring Dale was the sweet and unassuming Jessy, and that, though he evidently laboured to conceal his passion for his young and lovely kinswoman, that his glowing admiration of her daily increased; but her observation of Jessy was not so successful, for no' one look of her's betrayed that Leontine was beloved by her, and Agatha almost doubted whether this lovely girl was conscious of her cousin's ardent attachment towards her, much less could she divine the cause, or see the necessity of Craftly's attentions being always so conspicuously directed to the elder sister, when the younger was in possession of his affections; it was a sort of system of conduct which she could not voluntarily approve, and certainly was not a point in favour of Craftly, who, if his views were honourable, had no reason to be ashamed of selecting such an object as Jessy for his choice; and as he could not love both sisters, she thought it highly imprudent, and systematically cruel, in paying attentions to the one whom he actually did not love, and therefore had no intention of marrying, unless it was a stratagem only to inspire an interest in the heart of Jessy, by making her sister apparently her rival, and certainly it had such an appearance, which occasioned Agatha to form no very favourable opinion of the sentiments or principles of Craftly, as such conduct was decidedly against honour, delicacy or feeling, and the consequences likely to be most detrimental to the peace of the fisher's family, whenever a discovery should take place of the real object of Leontine's pursuit; and haughty and unamiable as Olive confessedly was, Agatha yet regarded her as a being more to be pitied than condemned, but was fully de-

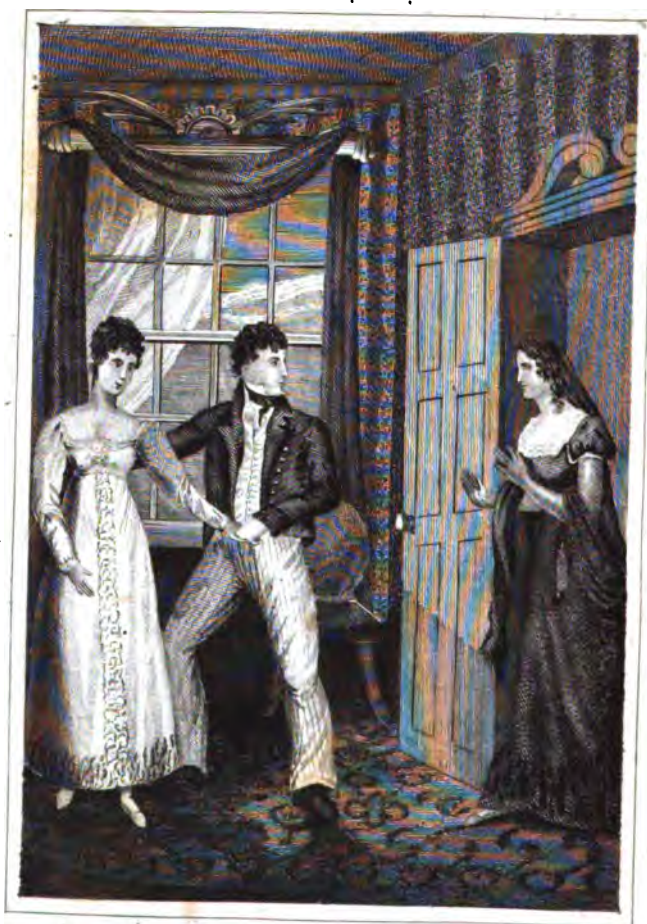
terminated, that, whatever motives Craftly had for adopting such conduct toward the two sisters, that she would not be the third in giving a colour to such duplicity, but utterly repel all advances made to her by Craftly, in any shape but that of the most distant civility, and that if Olive Blust had began to fear a rival in her, she should very shortly find herself mistaken.

All these reflections, blending also with some painful retrospections of her dear lamented father and her unhappy orphan state, kept Agatha from sleeping, insomuch that her attendant, Claribelle, frequently heard her deep-drawn sighs, and, urged by her affections for her beloved young mistress, could no longer remain silent ; (for by the express desire of Agatha, Claribelle always slept in her apartment ;) and she exclaimed,—

“ Dear Miss Agatha, what has made you so restless ? I protest, that you have not closed your eyes the whole of the night ! or if you have, sleep has not refreshed you ; I have heard you sigh too, heavily, as if your heart was breaking ; pray pardon me, my dear young lady, for making the inquiry, but I cannot bear to see you unhappy, and would willingly know the cause of it.” To which Agatha, who had been startled by the voice of Claribelle, replied,—

“ It is true that I have had but little sleep, Claribelle, but I do not know that I have any right to feel particularly unhappy ; it would be ungrateful to Providence to murmur or repine at my lot, when there are others who have more cause to mourn at their misfortunes.”

“ Why, that is true, miss,” answered Claribelle ; many are not half so comfortable as you are,—in so nice a house, where every body loves the ground you walk on ; the fisher perfectly adores you, and though one of the Miss Blust’s is not quite so agreeable or so kind as she ought to be, yet there is the other quite the reverse of her cross sister. I protest that Miss Jessie Blust is an angel of a girl, is not she, Miss Agatha ? and, if I may believe in what Shelly told me, she is quite the blossom of the family, what a pity then she is so tyrannized over by Miss Olive ! but that wout be for long ; for do you know, Miss Agatha, that David tells me, that she is going to be married to Mr. Craftly, her father’s



LEONORE CRAFTY AND JESSY SURPRISED BY THE
ENTRANCE OF ALATHA SINGLETON.

kinsman, and that he has been paying his addresses to her ever since they were quite children, and I think it very likely; for you see that Mr. Craftly cannot stay away from Herring Dale, for the life and the soul of him, he is always here, and close at the heels of Miss Olive, see him when you will."

"And so these are really the observations which have been made by the fisher's servants, on the conduct of Mr. Craftly," cried Agatha, perceiving that he had given the strongest colour to such a supposition, by his artful and invidious attack on the weakness of Olive's well-known partiality for him, and that he had begun with this system of duplicity, even so early as the days of childhood; and, shocked at the discovery of so much cruelty in the heart of, apparently, so amiable a young man, she mentally ejaculated,—poor Olive, how I pity thee! in the meanwhile Claribelle, had replied,—

"To be sure, miss, it is the observation of every one who has seen them together; Mr. Craftly pays Miss Olive Blust so much attention that any body, with half an eye, may see that they are lovers; so, I say, that when she is fairly married to Mr. Craftly, that it will be a great relief to poor Miss Jessy, for then she will have every thing her own way."

"Yes, when he is really married to her sister, or to any one else, there is no doubt but Jessy will have reason to be thankful," cried Agatha, believing that Jessy would be very indifferent as to who he married, and that the affections of such a man would be no prize to any woman; but these sentiments were not ultimately disclosed to Claribelle, fearful of exciting any prejudice in her mind against a relative of her protector; still Agatha arose on this morning more disgusted than ever, at the conduct which was so ungenerously adopted by Craftly, and well aware, that if it could be even surmised by the fisher, that it would never meet with the sanction and approbation of a father.

On her entrance to the parlour, the very first object she beheld there was Leontine Craftly and Jessy, whose hand he had snatched, and was about pressing it to his lips, when the door was suddenly opened by Agatha, who, starting back with involuntary surprise and confusion, not only at what she beheld, but well know-

ing that the scene she had witnessed must overwhelm the parties themselves with shame and embarrassment not to be described, she blushed deeply, while she exclaimed,—

“Pray pardon me, dear Jessy, I did not know that you had company, or I should have been the last being in existence who would have intruded on your presence! pray, pray forgive me!” and Agatha would instantly have again disappeared, had not the confused and blushing Jessy, in a tremulous voice, implored her to remain.

“You do not intrude,—you can never intrude on one to whom your presence is always welcome, dearest Miss Singleton,” uttered she; “our kinsman, who has visited us thus early this morning, at the express desire of my father, had been saying something at which he imagined I had taken offence, and as I did not speak, he—he—very ridiculously took hold of my hand—at the moment you came in, but it was merely a silly affair between us, nothing more, I assure you; and you will not mention it to my sister,—not that it would be of the slightest consequence, only Olive is so strange a girl that”——Jessy paused and looked indeed ridiculous enough, while Agatha, delicately feeling for her situation, instantly replied,

“You know but little of me, as yet, dear Jessy, if you are not sufficiently aware that I have no disposition to make any one uncomfortable by any interference, in matters that do not immediately concern me, neither does my curiosity extend to any person's business but my own; I beg, therefore, you will not again repeat a caution so perfectly unnecessary, at the same moment, let me add, as painful to my feelings as to your's.”

Jessy blushed a deeper red, but was silent, and at this moment Agatha stole a glance at the countenance of Leontine Craftily, which did not betray the slightest emotion; every feature was calm and settled, as though no conversation had passed between her and Jessy, on a subject in which he had no small share: was it confidence, or affrontery the most consummate?—she was at a loss to guess which; and the entrance of the fisher, with the two boys, with whom he had been taking a walk by the sea-side, very fortunately relieved the embarrassed feelings of poor Jessy, for

whose happiness, as well as Olive's, Agatha now endured the most alarming apprehensions ; for it was now evident that Craftly was making love to both of them, and that both sisters were likely to become the victims of his duplicity : at which she shuddered ; for the system of education which Agatha had received at the convent of the Holy Sisters though unfashionable to that of the present day, had taught her immediately to revolt at any sentiment clothed in artificial virtue ; and youthful and inexperienced as she literally was, in the ways of the world, she was not to be deceived by the false glare of the superficial light floating only on the surface of the human heart ; for the intrinsic value of those virtues which ought always to compose the interior part, without which it is of little value at all.

At the appearance of Miss Blust, toward whom Craftly immediately flew, and conducted her to a chair, taking one himself close beside her, Agatha averted her head with a sort of involuntary disgust she had never felt before towards any one human being, and she sighed at the reflection, that mankind were indeed but wolves in sheep's clothing, and more than ever commiserated the fate of the sweet Jessy, who had yielded the treasure of her innocent and guiltless heart, to the possession of such a monster of duplicity.

Little Wolf had a large bunch of beautiful wild flowers, which he had been at no small pains in collecting on the banks of the river, in his hand, and having arranged them into two pretty posies, he presented one to Jessy, and then, very awkwardly went up to the side of Olive, exclaiming, " this is the prettiest ; will you have it, and be friends with me ? father says I ought to go down on my knees, and beg pardon, for what I said to you yesterday after dinner,—but make me if you can ; I will go down on my knees to none but God : yet for all that sister Olive, I'm sadly sorry that I vexed you so, and if you will take these flowers, which I have gathered for you, I will offend you no more."

Olive disdainfully held out her hand to receive the flowers, but no returning smile of good humour mantled on her cheek, to assure the little forester that his offence was either forgotten or forgiven ; but he received the approbation of the whole company, and was

instantly restored to the good opinion of the warm-hearted fisher, who, whispering in the ear of Craftly, protested that he was one of the finest spirited boys in existence.

"Though he has a comical way of showing it," uttered he, "yet, shiver my top-sails! if I don't like the boy the better for it; I hate your smooth-tongued oily chaps, who look as if butter would not melt in their mouths, but cheese would not choke them. Shiver my top-sails! if I ever knew one of them that was worth a rope's yarn."

"Wolf is certainly a most singular and extraordinary boy," answered Craftly, "and if his understanding ripens with his years, he will most avowedly discover some traits of uncommon genius; but you will allow that Alfred is by far the most interesting of the two?—Wolf will be no favourite with the ladies."

"Tho d—— he went," cried the fisher; "and why not, pray?—it is not every woman that loves a sugar sop, or a soft tommy, and, curse me, if I think the other will be any thing more; turn him which way you will, he always gives you the same answer."

"While Wolf retains the very spirit of contradiction," answered Craftly; and although this conversation was carried on in an under tone, the last sentence, pronounced with some asperity, reached the ear of Agatha, and by no means diminished the unfavourable impression she had that morning imbibed against the character of Craftly, who once caught a glance of her expressive and intelligent countenance, beaming full upon him, and betrayed no small embarrassment, but from what cause was best known to himself. Affecting, however, a happy indifference as to what might be the subject of Miss Singleton's thoughts, or as if he had not been conscious of the serious expression which her dignified look had conveyed, he began playing with a little spaniel, which was the favourite of Olive, and then, addressing Wolf, who was feeding the dog with a small portion of his buttered roll, exclaimed,—

"And pray, Wolf, how comes it that you have this morning been so unmindful in your duty to another fair sister, for whom you have gathered no posey?"

Instantly the cheeks of Wolf became flushed with a colour of the brightest crimson, and leaving the side of little Silvia, and running up to Agatha, he replied.

“ I will answer that question to her, not to you, for it is no business of your’s ; you are not my brother, neither is Miss Singleton your sister.”

Craftly coloured deeply, and, for the first time, threw a contemptuous look at the little forester, which was not unfelt or unremarked by Agatha, who, telling Wolf, in a mild and gentle accent, that he must not speak so boldly to those who were so much older, he instantly retired, with Alfred, to see if his ship would sail, that David had made him a present of.

“ And David is to go down to the river with you, remember that,” cried the fisher, as Wolf was about to make his exit ; “ I will not permit either you or Alfred to ramble about alone.”

“ And why not ?” answered Wolf ; “ why not, father ?—do you think that we shall run away, or that I will let any body hurt Alfred ?—No, I would knock any boy down, if he was as big as a man, that would offer to hurt Alfred. I whacked a boy yesterday, only because he called Alfred a numskull, when he could not make the ship sail.”

The manner in which Wolf had uttered these words produced an involuntary fit of laughter from the fisher, in which Craftly joined, in spite of his utmost endeavours to look displeased with the little champion.

“ What, you whacked a boy yesterday in the neighbourhood of Cromer !” cried the fisher ; “ why, you young lion ! I shall have you taken up for an assault upon some gentleman’s son, some day or other.”

“ Oh, I am very sure that the boy I leathered was no gentleman’s son, father,” cried Wolf, “ or he would have behaved like one,—would not he, Alfred ?”

“ Yes, he called me names, Sir,” rejoined Alfred, “ and spit in my face, and would have given me blows, if Wolf had not come up to my assistance, for he was much stouter than me or Wolf ; but Wolf broke a stick about his back, and then he was glad to let me alone, and ran away.”

“ And it was high time, I think,” cried the fisher, almost convulsed with laughter, “ when a Wolf was going to devour him by piecemeal ; and pray, young gentleman, where did this

happen, and where was David, that he permitted the boy to insult you ?”

To which Alfred replied,—

“ David was on the opposite side of the bank, Sir, and it happened by the water, where all the boys go to swim ; but I hope, Sir, that you are not angry with poor Wolf, for indeed, indeed it was not his fault, nor David’s either,—I alone was to blame, for quarreling with one so much beneath me.”

“ Go, then, my boys,” cried the fisher, “ and amuse yourselves in what way you like best ; and take notice, that if you are again insulted by a parcel of idle boys, with any improper language, at the water-side, that I will punish the offenders, and not Wolf, who must henceforth learn to keep his hands to himself, which otherwise may lead to some very disagreeable consequences,—we must therefore avoid it.”

So saying, and giving them some money to spend, the fisher suffered the young companions to stroll out together, with David marching at their heels, with strict injunctions from his master that he was not to permit them to enter into conversation with any person whatever ; and no sooner were they withdrawn, than many comments were made on the conduct of the spirited little champion, Wolf, not much to the satisfaction of Agatha, who was compelled silently to hear him dispraised by Miss Blust, and afterward by Craftly, who pronounced that he was a wild, impetuous, though spirited boy, whose propensity to follow his own inclination might prove dangerous in time, if not severely checked ; to which Olive kindly added,—

“ You are right, cousin Craftly,—he is a prodigious forward, impudent boy, and if father don’t have him severely punished for his faults, he will be quite spoiled. He minds nobody now, you see ;—I protest I was shocked to hear in what manner he talked to you just now cousin Craftly ; had it been me, I would have given him a box on the ear, for his impertinence.”

“ O, he is a mere child,” cried Craftly, with affected carelessness, “ and what the urchin says is of little consequence ; he will be wiser in time than to give himself airs to which he has no pretensions.”

The cheeks of Agatha glowed indignantly, and feeling a stronger interest than ever in the character of her little favourite, she determined to avail herself of an opportunity of expressing her sentiments in favour of an unfortunate boy, whose every action he was so willing to condemn, and, fixing her eyes full on Craftly, she exclaimed,—

“And yet there are some pretenders, Mr. Craftly, much older than Wolf, who think themselves equally wise, and still have little reason to be proud of what they only assume.”

“Your remark is just, Madam, though unnecessarily severe,” answered Craftly, colouring so deeply, that it could not escape the piercing and jealous observation of Olive, while it equally astonished and confounded the innocent Jessy; but the good-natured and unsuspecting fisher attributed this speech of Agatha’s merely to her partiality for the little stranger, as wishing to take his part in his absence, and, by no means wishing to lessen it, he exclaimed,—

“Well, for my own part, I don’t see any harm in the boy, any more than Miss Singleton; he is a fine fellow, and, let who will say to the contrary, I shall grant him as many indulgences as I think proper. I don’t want any body’s instructions as to that matter, and so, cousin Craftly, let us begin to talk about something else; suppose we take a walk up to Adama’s library, and see what arrivals there are, and stick up the bill about the Cottage on the Cliff. Shiver my top-sails! that will be doing business in the crack of a whip; Miss Singleton, my dear, perhaps you will like to take a walk along with us, and you Olly; Jess, I know, has other things to mind, and will stay at home.”

Craftly turned his eyes on Jessy for a moment, but quickly withdrawing them, she timidly replied to the fisher,—

“Yes, I had much rather remain at home, father.”

“And I too, must beg leave to decline going out this morning, if you please, Sir,” cried Agatha; though I feel equally obliged for your kind invitation.” To which the fisher answered,—

“You are not at all obliged to me, my dear, for I always feel happy whenever I have the pleasure of your company; you are a very sensible girl, and one is always sure of hearing some sense

in your conversation : most women talk nonsense, and I would sooner listen to a sea-gull flapping about one's ears. Jess, go and bring my best hat, and my new India silk handkerchief; can't go to Adams's library without cutting a figure, or looking a little like other folks."

Olive, who longed to be of the party, now that neither Jessy nor Miss Singleton were going, knew not what excuse to avail herself of to have her wish gratified, and, just as her sister was leaving the room, she exclaimed,—

"Jessy, I think I heard you say, there were teas and sugars wanting for the store-room, and some pepper, Jessy, for your pickles, some spice too, Jessy."

Thus suddenly attacked, Jessy had no alternative but of pleading a necessity for Olive's going to order these articles when there was none, and answering,—

"Yes, you had better order them," hurried out of the room to conceal the silent anguish of an aching heart, while the fisher laughed and repeated to himself, "shiver my top-sails, if there is any pepper or vinegar wanting while Olive is here!" and, thus addressing her, he cried, "well, if you are going, why don't you go and put on your fangle-dangles?"

"And another dress, father," answered she, starting up with unbounded alacrity; "I cannot go to the library in a morning gown."

"And why can't you? what is the matter with that gown?" cried the fisher, eyeing it attentively, to see if he could discover any fault in it.

"Nothing, father, only I should like to put on another," answered she.

At which the fisher, out of all patience, exclaimed, "put on your grandmother's nightcap; put on a fiddle-stick's end; shiver my top-sails, if I stay a moment longer for any such nonsense; you shall go in that gown, or you shall stay at home! come cousin Craftly, let us be jogging."

"Well, did ever any body see the like of you, father! cried Olive, as she ran and fetched her bonnet and scarf, and hastily flinging it about her shoulders, she placed her arm under that of

Craftily's, and, without deigning to bestow a look on the silent, though now almost laughing, Agatha, hurried out of the gateway, and was even then reduced to the necessity of running with no small speed, in order to overtake the rapid strides of the fisher, leaving Jessy and Miss Singleton looking at each other with sensations, which in the one was certainly suppressed contempt, in the other, what she was willing, but was ashamed to impart.

Claribelle now came in to put some coals on the fire and to dust the table, for, by the express command of her mistress, she lent every assistance to the domestics in the fisher's family, and frequently lightened the burden of the sweet Jessy's fatiguing management of household affairs, and this morning she again offered her services to take the trouble off her hands.

"You are very obliging indeed, Claribelle," cried Jessy, "and if it is not really imposing on your good nature, I will thank you to arrange the dinner, and look after Alice and the dairy maids for me; and, in the mean time, I will bring in my work, and enjoy an hour's chat with dear Miss Singleton; it is not often that my sister Olive gives me an opportunity of being alone with her."

"The more the pity, Miss Jessy," cried Claribelle, as she applied her duster to the table; "the more is the pity that Miss Olive does not consider that you have as much right to enjoy yourself as she has; I protest, it is quite a shame to see such a sweet-tempered young lady as you put upon in the manner that you are, always slaving, morning, noon, and night; first in the dairy, then in the larder, then in the kitchen, then in the wash-house, then in the cellar; it is a burning shame, that's what it is, Miss Jessy!"

How long Claribelle would have chatted away on this subject we know not, but it may be possible to guess, had not her young mistress called her to order, and desired her to go for her work-basket, which having done, she quitted the room immediately, and left Jessy and Agatha to enjoy the pleasures of an uninterrupted conversation.

But poor Jessy felt abashed and painfully embarrassed, even when left alone with the only being in whom she was assured she could place implicit confidence, or to whom she could impart her

sorrows, or unburden her whole heart; and it was a considerable time after the departure of Claribelle, that Jessy could muster up courage to articulate a sentence, and during this painful interval of silence, two or three silver-eyed needles had been completely demolished, and the cotton broke in twenty pieces. "How tiresome, that I cannot find a needle to suit my work!" uttered she, with some embarrassment.

"You are indeed unfortunate, my dear girl," replied Agatha, half inclined to smile; "suppose you try one of mine."

The needle-case was handed to Jessy, and the offering was accepted, but tried with as little success; and Jessy, throwing down her work, protested she could not do another stitch, so she would not attempt it; "for, you know, Miss Singleton," uttered she, with a deep blush overspreading her fair and innocent countenance, "when one's thoughts are employed on other subjects, one cannot work, if one had ever such a mind."

"It is very true, my love," rejoined Agatha; "I very frequently endure that uncomfortable sensation myself, and am then obliged to leave my most favourite occupations."

The ice was now broke, and Jessy sighed deeply: still Agatha, though greatly sympathising in her feelings, was too delicate to inquire into the cause of her present inquietude. In a few moments, however, Jessy resumed the thread of her discourse as follows, to which Agatha became silently attentive.

"Yes, no doubt, my dear Miss Singleton," uttered Jessy; "you have had great occasions for reflections of an uncomfortable nature, yet, alas! they are not so agonizing, so terrible as mine!"

"Good Heavens! my sweet Jessy," exclaimed Agatha, now removing her eyes from off her work, and fixing them on the deeply-blushing countenance of her fair friend; "how you alarm me! what can possibly have given rise to sensations, either of a nature terrible or agonizing in so young, so innocent, a breast! if you deem me worthy of your confidence, as I judge that you do, freely unburden the source of those sorrows which so heavily afflict you, and, believe me, you will neither find your confidence misplaced, nor have cause to lament that you have chosen me as a participator of them."

"Ah! I know that already, dearest Miss Singleton," cried the tearful Jessy, "or I had not thus ventured to disclose them; I know you will never betray poor Jessy to the displeasure of her father, or the censure of her sister, both of which I should deeply feel, did they but even guess at my situation." Here Jessy made a painful pause, and Agatha, more alarmed than ever, and really imagining that her situation was even of a nature more delicate than she had suggested, exclaimed, in the most terrified accents,—

"Situation, my dearest Jessy! your situation! I implore you to tell me what that situation is! surely that insidious, artful young man, has not dared to——but no, no: forgive me Jessy,—it cannot be!"

"Of whom are you now speaking in such cruel terms, Miss Singleton?" cried Jessy, in the utmost astonishment. To which Agatha, not yet relieved from one dreadful apprehension, immediately replied,—

"Jessy, I am no dissembler; I am a lover of sacred, yet plain and simple truth, which, however painful, is the only beaten path, through which I have been taught to go; I cannot wander from it, even to serve a friend, nor disguise my sentiments in the shallow veil of hypocrisy, and, though I wound your feelings, I must be explicit. You cannot imagine me to be blind to the dishonourable and cruel system of conduct which a certain relative of yours is now adopting, both toward you and your sister,—your kinsman, Leontine Craftly; 'tis of him I am speaking, and if, as I much fear, he has already obtained too powerful an influence in your heart to be easily shaken as it appears he has also in that of Olive's, what should I say in favour of such a man, since there is no term vile enough to give him a name. Oh, Jessy! if you love Leontine Craftly, my heart does indeed bleed for you a every pore."

"Oh, do not think so hardly of him!" cried Jessy, now bursting into an agony of tears "I cannot bear to hear him so reproached."

"No, Jessy, I am aware that you cannot," returned Agatha, in a calm but impressive tone, "and I would most willingly spare

you a trial of such painful feelings, could I use duplicity toward you, or conceal mine ; but this I cannot do, and be your faithful friend, and it is much better for him to merit reproach, than you to be reproached, Jessy. You had better abandon such a hypocrite, than he to abandon you,—than your father to abandon you, for his sake ; the injury he would render you would be irreparable ; you can render him none, for a libertine feels nothing, Jessy,—he has no feeling but for his exclusive self:—self is the god of his idolatry, he worships nor bends to no other shrine, save his licentious passions ; and such a man I take Leontine Craftly to be."

"Indeed, indeed, you are deceived, Miss Singleton," cried the weeping Jessy ; "I have known Leontine from the days of my earliest childhood, and never heard him taxed with such a crime before ; we have been brought up together, even as twin lambs, and frolicked as harmless and as playful ; together have we kneeled,—together have we prayed before the holy altar, where first he confessed that I alone was the object of his affections."

"Very likely, my dear," cried Agatha, feeling more deeply for the innocent victim of man's perfidious art ; "he did all this, and it cost him but little pains. Men can swear at the holy altar, and as they bend to the holy shrine with vows of everlasting love, deceive, betray, abandon, the object of their then seeming idolatry ! Well, my love, and if Craftly swore to you that you were the sole and entire object of his affections, pray what is your sister Olive the object of ? if you will answer me that question, my sweet Jessy, I will cease to rail at Craftly, and tell you that he is a fair and honourable man : what is Olive the object of, since it is apparent, almost to every one, that he pays her far more attentions than he does you ? Has the pious young gentleman had recourse to the holy altar here to ? tell me Jessy."

"I cannot, Miss Singleton," replied the trembling, too conscious, blushing girl ; "I cannot imagine the reason why he wishes to persuade Olive that he is attached to her, when he tells me that she is wholly indifferent to him ; alas ! I know that she loves him, and it gives me great pain ; I am tortured to think that poor Olive will one day be so deceived !

"And what day will that be?" cried Agatha, unable to resist smiling.

"When he marries me," replied Jessy, with the most unsuspecting innocence; "yet I own, that at times I think it strange, and could be angry with Craftily, as I was this morning, Miss Singleton, when you came in so unexpectedly and surprised us; he was sadly vexed, I assure you."

"And yet he did not appear much chagrined," answered Agatha; "he could smile at Olive too, when she came in, and conversed with her, as if nothing had particularly occurred to give you uneasiness, which is a proof at once of the baseness of his heart, and the wanton depravity of his disposition. Now, hear me, dear Jessy, before we are presently interrupted, and I shall not again have an opportunity of conversing with you on a subject in which your peace, your happiness, and your honour, is so materially concerned: hear me, dear girl, and do not listen to me lightly, but regard me as your monitor and friend. I know as little of the world, and am as inexperienced in the real character of mankind, perhaps, as you are; but I had a father who knew them well, and he has taught me to distinguish between the semblance of virtue and the reality, and that a man of honour has but one way of gaining the affections of a woman of honour, and both he and she would disdain any other. There are no round-about ways in pure and honourable love: a man neither seeks concealment, nor wishes to hide the passion with which he is inspired, much less does he show it to another, merely for the gratification of his vanity, but is proud of the being whom he has selected to be the partner of his heart's secret choice: he glories in her,—makes her his wife in the face of the whole world, and puts it out of the power of mortal man to censure her; but a licentious lover only of woman, a libertine,—oh, Jessy! he is a monster under the canopy of sweet Heaven, abusing holy nature, and her sacred laws! he lives unpitied, if he lives at all, and when he dies, ah, Jessy, think how dreadful will be his fate, when the victims whom his base arts have sent to an early grave shall meet in terrible array against him!—then Jessy, and not till then, will his heart be open to remorse, and feel that he has merited the bitter thorn of compunction!

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Do you remember the last sweet tone
Of this dear harp, now broken ?
Do you remember the days long flown
Since last that tone was spoken !
Oh ! often at night it came like the light
Of some angel, earthward flying,
Whose heavenly wings had touch'd the strings,
And soften'd the sound with her sighing.”

Jessy had reclined her head on the table to conceal her fast-flowing tears from the observation of her fair monitor, and, during the last speech of Agatha, her bosom heaved with the most convulsive agitation, which awakened the tenderest emotions of pity and compassion for an object so innocent, so lovely,—so amiable ; but Agatha did not repent, that though she had sustained a sharp trial of her feelings, that she had gradually opened her mind to contemplate the too faithful portrait she had drawn of the insidious, and cruel arts of mankind, by which hapless woman becomes too frequently the unfortunate victim of her own credulity ; still Agatha wished to say something to relieve the feelings of the so suddenly surprised, and heart-wounded Jessy, before the arrival of the fisher, and, in the kindest and gentlest accents, she intreated her to compose her agitated feelings, and to consider that the exertion of every faculty of her mind was now necessary to conquer an unhappy attachment which she feared, under present appearances, it would be the height of folly and even madness to yield to ; and that, unless Craftly acted very opposite to what he was now doing, there would be little chance of his ever requiting her faithful love, in the fair and honourable way that every honest man wishes to do with a female whom he really respects and loves.

“ For, believe me, Jessy,” cried Agatha, “ and it grieves me deeply, while candour urges me to declare it to you, that I do not think Craftly loves either you or Olive well enough to act on honourable terms, and that it is only a base counterfeit that he is offering to both of you, to gratify the most detestable and cruel of all

human passions and purposes ; weep not, sweet Jessy, such an object is unworthy of your tears ; the possession of such a heart is not worth sighing for,—the attentions of such a man valueless ; were it otherwise, (and for your sake I would that it were so !) why should Craftly wish to dissemble with your sister Olive ?—why conceal from your father his affection for you ? Is he not your parent ? is he not the most proper personage to disclose his sentiments to on such an occasion ? has he not a right to be consulted on the happiness of his child ? so kind, so good a father too ! ah, Jessy ! you are the pride of that dear father's heart,—the darling, the blessing of his old age ! I think how it would break his heart to hear his Jessy deceived, betrayed,—perhaps torn from his tender arms, and by whom ?—the man in whom he most placed implicit trust and confidence ;—the boy too, in childhood, that he most loved ! Jessy, turn from the sickening picture which fancy now has drawn ! may the reality never have existence but in fancy ! Heaven and all good angels, guard my Jessy from such a fate !”

Agatha had now touched the most tender chord in Jessy's heart, and that was her father ; and Leontine, Olive, all were forgot, when she thought of her duty to this most kind, this most dear of all earthly friends !

“ Victory is yours, dearest Miss Singleton,” exclaimed Jessy, instantly drying her tears, and throwing her arms round the snowy neck of the lovely monitor ; “ I would not pain the heart of my dear father for the wealth of worlds ; and though I hope my cousin Craftly is not the faulty being you describe, and though my silly heart would yet encourage the pleasing hope, that he would not be so cruel as to deceive poor Jessy, still, Miss Singleton, I would perish ere I would again listen to vows so offered ; no, I would rather resign him to my sister Olive than to receive a heart so divided, or believe in a disposition so wavering and inconstant, and which does not appear to know itself.”

“ You have said rightly, dearest girl,” cried Agatha ; “ a libertine is the last person in existence to know himself.”

“ And you believe that I shall be happier without the attentions or affections of Leontine, dearest Miss Singleton,” repeated Jessy. To which Agatha gravely replied,—

"Happiness, my dear girl, results from the consciousness of having acted rightly; 'tis that, and that alone, that is the surest founder of peace, and every noble, every generous thought springs from it; we cannot be unhappy, while we feel assured that we merit the approval of conscience, and the protection of that all-seeing eye to whom all hearts are known, and from whom our most secret thoughts cannot be hidden. This is the happiness, dearest Jessy, and this happiness will be yours, should you shun the path of which I have fortunately been the instrument of warning you; in the meantime, behave in your usual manner toward your father's kinsman, in all but listening clandestinely to any secret avowal of his passion, and give him no reason to imagine that you suspect his designs, till he affords you an open and a seasonable opportunity for so doing, then bid him apply to your father; and, trust me, if he means you honourable affection, he will not be long before he discloses his intentions to your father; and believe not in vows, promises, or oaths, which sooner or later may be broken, for, as the poet too justly describes the passion of his sex, the vows and promises of mankind are not to be faithfully relied on; as in the following passage from a well known play:—

"When a man talks of love, with caution hear him!
But if he swears—he'll certainly deceive you."

Jessy heaved a deep sigh, responsive to her feelings, and her faithless Leontine, for such she feared he was, but the powerful impression he had so long successfully made on her young and innocent heart, repelled the thought of his being a professed libertine: she hoped that time would convince her gentle monitor that she was mistaken, still she determined faithfully to abide by her better counsel, committing to her judgment her most secret thoughts, and thanking her a thousand times for her friendly advice. Jessy and her separated for the present; the one to inspect the preparations which were making for the dinner, and the other to make some little alterations in her dress; for Agatha could never divest herself of a certain system in which she had been so delicately educated, and though she had but little pride in adorning her beautiful person, she had a close regard to simplicity and neatness

in her attire, and to braiding regularly those lovely tresses, which needed no other additional aid of ornament, and assisted by Claribelle, they were put into their usual form, and she had just finished her toilet, when she heard the door of her chamber softly unlocked, and the head of Wolf obtrude itself on her notice ; he held out a fine peach in his hand, while he exclaimed,—

“ This is for you, dear sister, it was given to me for my management of sailing my little ship on the water, by such a fine beautiful lady, who was walking by the sea-side with a fine gentleman ; so they stopped to look at my ship, and when I had got it to sail so nicely, she said I was a clever little fellow, and gave me this peach, and Alfred some apples ; so then they went away and left us, and when David came up to where we were sailing the ship, he said that the lady was the greatest in the place, and that the gentleman who was with her was a lord, and that I might be very proud of the present she had given me ; so Alfred has brought home his apples, and I have brought home my peach, but deuce a one shall have a bit of it but you, my dear, dear, pretty sister ; so take it, pray take it from your own poor Wolf, who loves you so dearly !”

The peach was accepted, and Wolf invited into the chamber, where he soon began to seat himself without further ceremony, while Agatha, dividing the peach into three parts, insisted that he should that moment go down into the parlour, and offer a share of it to his sisters Jessy and Olive.

“ On no other condition will I eat one morsel of it, dear Wolf,” cried Agatha ; “ remember, that they are your sisters as much as I am, and would think themselves slighted were you to show any preference to me, neither would it be very proper in the house of your benefactor ; I thank you, dear boy, all the same, but indeed, indeed, you must obey me.”

“ Well, I will do that, because you would have me,” uttered Wolf, a little surlily, “ but I did not save the peach for them ; I don’t mind going without a bit myself, as long as I thought you would have it ; but as for sister Olive, she might whistle for a peach before I would get her one ; and that Crafty too, I don’t love either of them, because they are so cross to me.”

"Well, that is reason enough, I am sure, Master Wolf," cried Claribelle, who had attached herself to the little forester, because her young mistress had done so; "and if I was my young lady"——here Agatha gave a look, perfectly understood by her attendant, and she was immediately silent, while Agatha mildly exclaimed,

"If you were me, Claribelle, I am persuaded that you would think it necessary to act just as I do now; come, my dear boy, let us go down stairs together.

Wolf, now cheerfully obeyed, and, on their entrance, ran up to Olive and related his little tale with great glee, about the grand lord and lady, and to which she listened with more complacency than usual, and, while she took her share of the peach, she exclaimed,—

"Well, and I shouldn't at all wonder if it was the marchioness you have seen, the marquis was at Adams's library only this morning; Jessy, there's news for you!—all Cromer will be alive; for do you know that their beautiful daughter, Lady Lavinia, is with them, aye, and the young lord too,—that sweet young man, who was here last season."

"What sweet young man?" cried Jessy, in so apparently listless and mournful a tone, that Agatha was under some serious apprehension that the agitation which she had been suffering would have excited the attention of her father and Olive; for Craftly, under some trifling pretence or other, had stepped out.

But the fisher was peeling an apple which Alfred had given him, and Olive, whose spirits seemed greatly elated by her morning's walk, burst into an immoderate fit of laughter.

"There, father," cried she, "if that is not a good one!" Jessy is pretending that she don't know who I mean by the 'sweet young man,' when that is the name that Lord Montague goes by whenever he comes to Cromer; and well he may, for I do not think there's one to match him in the world for beauty, and politeness to the ladies; but I will tell Miss Singleton about the raffle, and the parasol;—You must know, Miss Singleton, that father let Jessy and I put our names down for a raffle at Adams's circulating library, it was for a most beautiful parasol, all mounted with silver; well, when we went in to throw, who should pop into the shop but

the Marchioness of Montault and Lady Lavinia, her daughter, and Lord Montague, her son, and several other grand lords and ladies; how Jessy and I blushed when it came to our turn to throw, did not we Jessy? because, you must know, Miss Singleton, that Lord Montague looked very hard at us, first at Jessy, and then at me, and then at"——

"Shiver my top-sails! why don't you tell the story at once?" cried the fisher; "what does it matter where he looked, or how he looked? what is the use of a man having eyes, if he cannot see?"

"Well, father, and he had eyes, sure enough," retorted Olive, "and he made use of them, did he not, Jessy? and they were the finest blue eyes I ever saw in a man's head; but to come to the story, Miss Singleton, as father says;—Jessy took up the dice and threw five, and lost her chance; then it came to my turn, and my lord looked at me again, and I looked at my lord, for he had thrown the highest number all but one,—it was thirty-five; well, lo, and behold, I threw thirty-five too! so there were no more to throw; and what do you think my lord did, before all the ladies and gentlemen that were there? why, he took up the beautiful parasol, and said, 'there is no contending with a fair lady, the prize be your's;' and gave it to me, Miss Singleton, with such a sweet smile, and pleasant countenance, that I thought he looked ten times handsomer than before! was not that pretty? so I have got the parasol up stairs in one of my drawers, for I dare say I was envied finely that evening by all the girls in Cromer, for receiving such a compliment from a lord's son; and my patience, how I blushed! did not I, Jessy? and now, Miss Singleton, what do you think of my Lord Montague?" To which Agatha, almost laughing, replied,—

"Why, I think he did nothing more than any other gentleman would have done, precisely under the same circumstance, even though he were not a lord's son; there was no merit in that if he had no other."

"No, shiver my top-sails, if there was!" cried the fisher, chuckling heartily at this last observation; "many lords disgrace their titles, don't they, Miss Singleton?"

"Would to heaven that they did not, Sir!" was the reply of Agatha, just as the dinner was served up, and at which they were

again favoured with the company of Craftly, who evidently betrayed some embarrassment at the downcast eyes of the sweet Jessy, who now regarded him with sensations very different to those she had experienced at their last meeting, still she evinced no ill humour,—she was the same mild, gentle being, as ever; but, whenever Craftly addressed her sister Olive, next to whom, as usual, he was seated, her lovely cheeks assumed a colour of the brightest crimson, which suddenly fading, she became as pale as the lily, but, as this was frequently the case, it was regarded by no one but her whose sensitive heart beat in unison with her's, and that heart was Agatha's, who could not behold the smiling hypocrite before her without feeling the greatest detestation of his character, when she reflected, that so sweet a flower as the innocent Jessy might be blighted by such a monster, had she been imprudent enough to have yielded to his demoniac influence over her affections, which she fervently prayed she had been instrumental in destroying, at least to render abortive.

During the repast the fisher frequently addressed Agatha on the subject of his visit to Cromer, assuring her that he had been at great pains in sticking up the bill in the most conspicuous part of Adams's shop; that many had read it even while he was there, and that there was no doubt but there would be plenty of applicants for the Cottage on the Cliff in a very few days, and concluded this remark with, “and I assure you, that my kinsman has been taking a great deal off my hands, my dear, in describing the romantic situation of the cottage, and about the fine prospect it commanded of the sea-side, and a thousand other things beside, that had quite slipt my memory, but cousin Craftly knows how to talk to the gentry much better than I can, you see, Miss Singleton, now I don't understand the one half of what they are saying; there is the Marchioness of Montault, she is reckoned a main clever lady in these parts, but shiver my top-sails if ever I could find it out! and I would rather hear you talk for four-and-twenty hours together, than I would be compelled to listen to her ladyship for one, so that is the truth of it; then there is her daughter, that the people of Cromer say is such a prodigious fine creature, curse me if the girl is not half a fool! and carries a spy-glass, bobbing at

her breast, in a gold chain, which she stares every body out of countenance with, on pretence that she cannot see clearly without one; but, shiver my top-sails! I would make her see if I were her father, without any such fal-lals, or I would know the reason why."

Agatha could not resist smiling at the fisher's remark, but conceiving that some portion of thanks were due to Craftly for the trouble he had taken about the cottage, she made an offer of her grateful acknowledgments, which was only replied to with a slight vermillion overspreading his cheek, as he caught a glance of her bright and intelligent eyes, and a cold "you are welcome, madam!" pronounced in a sort of offended tone, while Olive, delighted at this distance of reserve which was now preserved between her kinsman, and her so much-dreaded rival, the beautiful Agatha, and believing that she owed the deference which Leontine paid to her, wholly to the superiority of her own personal charms, to those of any object in creation, her spirits flowed with a vivacity which was unbounded, and she neither heeded or cared for the depression which so apparently preyed on poor Jessy, or seemed anxious about inquiring into the cause, and to the observation of her father on the Lady Lavinia, she jocosely exclaimed,

"Lord, father, as if you did not know that it was the fashion to wear glasses, whether one is near sighted or not! for my part I think they are exceedingly becoming, and give one an air of consequence."

"Give you the air of a fiddle-stick's end," cried the fisher, as he whiffed away the smoke of his tobacco with an extraordinary exertion; "shiver my top-sails! if ever I catch you wearing one, I will twist a rope yarn about your neck, and you may wear that if you please, to clear your eye-sight and give you an air of consequence, for in my mind one is just as likely to do that as the other; what say you, Miss Singleton?"

"Why, really, Sir," uttered Agatha, "I scarcely know how to give an opinion where two to one would be against me, with respect to a custom so generally prescribed to by the votaries of fashion; still I will boldly venture to affirm, that I do not think it at all necessary to follow a custom so ridiculous, merely because fash-

ion sanctions it; and, if I were not really near-sighted, I would not wear a glass to please any one, yet you must allow me to say, at the same time, that many do, of very superior intellect; such is the influence of fashion, which appears to reconcile even contradictions to each other; if I had not an infirmity I would not affect to have one, and that is all I wish to say on the matter."

"Well, my dear, you have said what is very much to the purpose," cried the fisher, "and I wish every body could say as much; but, as to fashion, why, curse the fashion, I say, for any good that it does to civilized society, or to the increase of the morals of the rising generation, and if every man was to follow the fashion now-a-days, we should be a set of the most degenerate scoundrels in existence; for what does fashion teach us? There is a man, perhaps a titled one, no matter, that does not make him a bit the better, goes into the house of his friend, and seduces his daughter! while another, does him the same sort of favour with his wife! and if these circumstances are not publicly known, he sneaks out with a whole skin, because fashion has reconciled it to his conscience as a thing of no consequence, and he having trod in the same path that others have trod before, believes that he is to escape punishment for the commission of so foul a crime, both here and hereafter, giving no after-thought to the misery he has heaped on the heads of his unfortunate victims, or the disgrace and ruin in which he has plunged a whole family.—I say, Miss Singleton, that this is monstrous when we see a man after this, thrusting his nose into society, and pretending to the principles and character of a gentleman and an honest man, after an open violation of one of its most sacred laws.—I say that this is abominable! and were such scoundrels to be exterminated from the race of men, after such a crime, the repetition would be less frequent, and the offenders more generally known.—Women would shun them, and men abhor them."

What effect this speech had on the feelings of Craftly, it would have been difficult to have ascertained from the expression of his countenance; but the paleness of Jessy's, which was now too apparent to escape the observations of her father, directed also the eyes of Craftly toward her; yet quickly averting them, as if fear

ful of inquiring into the heart-wounding expression they conveyed; he began as usual to play with Silvia, Olive's little favourite; when the fisher regarding his youngest daughter with some surprise, exclaimed,—

“Why, Jessy, my duckling, what ails thee? why, thee looked as freshly as a rose, when thou came down stairs this morning, and now thee art whiter than a lily; what be'st the matter, girl?”

“And do I not show symptoms of disorder too, as well as Jessy, Sir?” said Agatha, hitting upon the only stratagem that could save Jessy from the investigation of her father, “for I assure you, that we have both been alarmed from the same cause.”

“What, have Jessy and you seen the ghost at last, Miss Singleton?” cried Olive.

“No, indeed, it was mere flesh and blood, in the form of David's mare,” uttered Agatha; but positively I did not see her in the garden till she jumped over the fence, and came suddenly upon us: Jessy screamed, and so did I; for who would have thought of seeing flying Fan in the flower-garden, when we supposed she was quietly feeding in the stable? however, the boy soon came to our assistance, and got her away; but, indeed, it was very silly of us to be so frightened,—was it not, Sir?”

“Yes, I must needs agree with you there, Miss Singleton,” cried the fisher; “for Fan is a quiet beast, she would never have done you any mischief, only Jess, who is so fond of her flowers, was afraid of Fan's treading them down, I suppose, wasn't thee, my Jess? Well, well, never grieve thee, she shan't go there again, I promise you. I will have a new fence put up there to-morrow morning, the old one has been going for some time; so Fan has done more good than harm by her unseasonable visit.”—And without waiting to hear any thing more of Fan, the fisher arose and went immediately out, to examine the state of the fence, and to give orders that the stable door should be constantly shut, while it was going under the necessary repairs.

How true it is that one single deviation from the native truth, however simple it may appear, may, notwithstanding, lead us into error, and be productive of some displeasing consequences, both to ourselves and to others; and no sooner was the fisher gone

than Agatha blushed deeply at the little artifice she had been guilty of, which, although it had greatly served to lessen the embarrassed feelings of poor Jessy, had made it necessary for her to frame a falsehood, and as Craftily had disappeared too, with the fisher, the young ladies were left together to pursue what subject of conversation they liked best.

Olive, whose spirits since dinner had not by any means diminished, but rather increased, of course introduced her favourite topic, which was finery and dress, protesting that she had seen the pattern of a beautiful silk spencer at Miss Mury's, the milliner, and that it was very much like the shape of one worn by Lady Lavinia Montault; in short, Olive so commented upon the beauty of this so greatly-admired spencer, that she protested she would have one made like it, whether her father liked it or not; "and so can you, Jessy, if you please," cried she; "you know we have got plenty of silk by us, that father got out of the wreck, last year, of the Adona, and it is not yet made up; now let us take it to Miss Mury, and get her to make us the spencers, and father won't be a bit the wiser, you know; Miss Mury can put it in his bill when she sends it in at Christmas, and lump it all together; father would pay it, if it were twice as much." To which Jessy gravely made the following reply:—

"I have no objection to your having a spencer, if you like it, Olive, though, if I may speak truly, I do not see what occasion you can have for such an addition to your wardrobe, for myself I should think it a useless piece of extravagance; but for cutting up the nice piece of silk that father made us a present of to make into gowns is unpardonable, as well as Miss Mury adding it to her bill; to neither of which, I promise you, would I willingly consent."

"Indeed, Miss Formal?" cried Olive, laughing.

"Yes, indeed, Olive, I am serious," replied Jessy; "formal, or not formal, I do not see why we should add to the expences of our dear father unnecessarily."

"Now, Miss Singleton, did you ever see such a simpleton as my sister Jessy," cried Olive, "as if a few shillings, more or less, could make any difference to father, while he is paying it; but I

don't care, a spencer I'll have, and I will tell Miss Murry to be sure to make it as much like Lady Lavinia's as she possibly can: I should so like to be thought to dress like Lady Lavinia!"

"And why should you wish to dress above the station you are in, Olive?" cried Jessy: "why cannot you content yourself with being what you are?"

"What is that to you, Miss Jessy?" retorted Olive, "I wish you would mind your own business, and not trouble your head about mine."

"Neither should I," cried Jessy, "if you were not my sister; and that I cannot bear to see you——"

"To see me what, pray?" replied Olive, on whose brow a frown was now gathering that boded some violence; "to see me what, Miss Prudence?"

"To see you forgetting that you are my sister," answered Jessy, in a mild, though reproachful accent.

"I don't care a button what you or any body think," repeated Olive; "and I will dress as I choose, in spite of you or father either; cousin Craftly says I ought to dress well, for a girl of my figure, and he is a better judge than you of the matter; and what is more, he said——"

Poor Jessy was now almost fluttered to tears, and the unfortunate mention of Craftly at this precise moment of her wounded feelings, very quickly succeeding in producing an involuntary shower, which she was unable to suppress, and she sobbed out,—

"It is of little consequence, Olive, what cousin Craftly says; I don't want to hear any thing that he has said;—it is a matter of the most perfect indifference to me, I assure you."

"So it seems, when, it is plain, you cannot help crying at it," uttered Olive, reddening like scarlet, and not knowing to what cause to attribute her emotion.

But Jessy quickly replied,—"'Tis your unkindness, Olive, that occasions me to shed tears; it is you who have drawn them from my heart, and not Craftly."

Olive now pouted and became silent, while Agatha, whose heart sympathized in the feelings of poor Jessy, endeavoured by every

means to soften the asperity of the one, and to compose the agitated feelings of the other

"Dear girls, I beseech you to let this difference go no further between you," uttered she, approaching, and taking a hand of each in her own; "I implore you, dear Olive, to kiss your sister, and be friends, before your father returns and sees you at such war with each other; Jessy could not mean seriously to offend you, nor you, I am certain, would not seriously give her pain. Think for what a trifle you have jarred; think, dear girls, that you ought not to suffer it to produce a cause of dissension between sisters, who should ever be the dearest friends; come, dear Olive, let me again see that smile playing on your lip, which only a few moments ago was the sweetest charm in a countenance, that never looks displeasing but when it steals behind a cloud."

If ever a speech was likely to produce the effect for which it was intended, it was this of Agatha's, on the feelings of Olive; for it was not only soothing to her vanity, but she was assured, that if Miss Singleton thought her handsome, she must be beautiful beyond expression in the eyes of Craftly. And the frown instantly disappearing from her countenance, she gave her hand to Jessy without a moment's hesitation, while the amiable girl confessed that she herself had been betrayed into an involuntary warmth of temper with Olive, which she hoped she would the more readily pardon, as Miss Singleton had most kindly condescended to be the mediator between them.

"Well, I am sure I am not angry now one bit," cried Olive; "I was only vexed on account of my spencer, but it is all over now, and Jessy and I are friends again,—are not we, Jessy?"

To this Jessy assented, by cordially returning the embrace of her sister, and it was very fortunate that the absence of the fisher and Craftly afforded them an opportunity of being perfectly reconciled to one another, a circumstance that was also productive of much happiness to the kind-hearted Agatha; while Olive, from this evening began to regard the beautiful orphan with a less prejudiced eye, for she saw that she courted not the attentions of Leontine Craftly, and therefore could no longer consider her in the light of a rival.

Agatha in consequence, soon received a different sort of treatment from Olive, whose advice and opinion was now resorted to on every occasion, and even the spencer was submitted to her judgment, which was made by Miss Mury, the milliner, on a more reasonable plan than at first proposed, and without any infringement on the silk ; for, on its being shown to Agatha, she declared in favour of its being only reserved for gowns, and that it would have been a wanton piece of extravagance to have had it cut up for spencers.

Amity and peace now apparently seemed to reign in the house of the fisher, for Craftily was frequently absent on short excursions round the coast, to superintend the concern he had in the herring-fishery, which greatly served to lessen the depression of poor Jessy, to whom the society of Miss Singleton was not only a source of the most inexpressible delight, but of constant improvement ; for Agatha, who had a selection of the most approved authors, occasionally read them to her beloved young friend, and gradually gave her a taste for works of literature, moral and instructive, nor was modern or ancient history neglected ; and Alfred and Wolf, sometimes being present at their researches, were allowed the privilege of taking what books they chose out of the library of Miss Singleton, which they often took to school with them ; for the fisher having consulted with some of his friends, was advised to place the two little foundlings under the care of Mr. Ruthen, a very able master of a public seminary in the vicinity of Cromer ; “ for, in the first place,” cried the fisher, “ it will keep them out of harm’s way, and, in the next, it will tame the disposition of that wild boy, Wolf ; for when he is old enough I will make him a trader, and I warrant me he will be a clever fellow for the fishery ; he has wit, strength, and hardihood, and will soon learn to handle a rope’s yarn as well the best man in the ship.”

Agatha heard the destination of her favourite Wolf in silence, but not without experiencing sensations of the most painful kind, or inquiring why her heart beat so tumultuously and anxiously for the fate of this boy ; why should she feel repugnant to his embracing the life which his benevolent protector had pointed out for him ? why should not Wolf be a fisher ? the poor, deserted, neglect-

ed, and uneducated offspring of some unfortunate unknown, long since mouldered into dust, perhaps, or if yet living, which was doubtful, ashamed of owning him; what then were his prospects, or his expectations, that he should not labour in a hardy profession, for which, indeed, his disposition seemed naturally to have formed him? Ah! but not for such a life, reflected Agatha; methinks he has a mind which soars above it, and that he is designed for a higher station; that noble eye, like the young eaglet of a valiant nest, seems to fix his thoughts far beyond the low dunghill where his fate once threw him, in the Black Forest; and I know not why I think it, yet my heart tells me that Wolf is descended from a warlike line.—Ah! would to Heaven that the gifts of fortune were alone mine, for thy sake, dear, friendless boy! how proudly would I lay it down to ransom thee from thy ignoble bondage, the servitude of fishery on the rough seas!”

Agatha was sitting at the window of her chamber, when she pronounced these words, and it was wide open, though long after the hour that she usually retired to rest; even Claribelle, who had been desired by her young mistress to go to bed, had sunk into a profound slumber, so that it was scarcely possible for any one human being to have overheard the sentences which had just escaped from her lips, for no living soul was stirring in the house of the fisher; yet overheard Agatha certainly was by some person, who apparently had been stationed under the window, for in a voice, the sound of which was familiar to her ear, yet it was neither that of Craftily nor the fisher; it whispered the following words:—

“ Can Wolf be friendless, when the voice of beauty and compassion so sweetly sues in his behalf? Can Wolf be deserted when a pitying angel is anxious o’er his fate? Oh, never! thrice envied, happy boy! who would not wish to resemble a destiny so blest?”

A slight gust of wind agitated the foliage of the dark pine trees, from whence this voice seemed to have issued, but no vestige of a human being escaped from them; and Agatha, almost motionless with surprise, and even terror, instantly closed the casement, drew the curtains round it, and extinguished the lamp, which was yet brightly burning in her chamber; after which all was silent as before: whoever had uttered these words had suddenly departed,

and Agatha, though she endured the most alarming apprehensions, felt that it would be folly and madness to disturb the fisher's family on so trifling an incident ; nor could she do this without being charged with some impropriety, in sitting with her window open at so late an hour after all the family were gone to bed, and that she would be obliged then to repeat the words which had occasioned the intrusion of so extraordinary a visitor.

The only remedy, therefore, that she could apply to her fears, under existing circumstances, was silence and patience ; besides, there was no hostility offered against her in the words she had listened to : it could not be an enemy that had spoken thus. And she consoled herself with the reflection that always accompanies innocence, that she had injured nor offended no one ; except that Craftly might suspect her having obtained some influence over the mind of Jessy Blust, to induce her to discourage his clandestine addresses toward her ; for Craftly had of late avoided all conversation with her, and scarcely noticed her, as even being an inhabitant in the house of his kinsman.

But this was not the voice of Craftly she was pretty certain, for there were tones in it of the softest yet most manly delicacy, and a sort of affecting pathos, which seemed to awaken emotions of a tender and sacred nature ; it was something like her father's, had her father been a younger man ; and Agatha thought that she had somewhere caught a strain of such a voice, again repelling a thought so vague and uncertain, she attributed it to mere fancy, like the illusion of some pleasing dream, which has no existence but in the phantoms of the bewildered imagination.

She might have dreamed of such a voice, but that she had now listened to one in reality, the evidence of her waking senses could no longer doubt ; at length sleep gently closed her eyes in forgetfulness, and the guardians who ever faithfully watch over innocence, were the harbingers of peace in an orphan's bosom, whose hitherto pure and blameless life was as the fragrant and the spotless rose, in which no canker worm had yet crept to despoil it of its native bloom.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ah ! what is friendship but a name,
A charm that lulls to sleep !
A shade that follows wealth and fame,
But leaves the wretch to weep.

And what is love ? an emptier sound,
The modern fair one's jest :
On earth unseen, or only found,
To warm the turtle's nest.

AGATHA arose at a much earlier hour the ensuing morning than she had been accustomed to do since she had been an inhabitant of Herring Dale, and was, to the no small surprise of Claribelle, ready dressed, and sitting at the window of her chamber when her attendant awoke ; of course, an immediate inquiry was made after her health, to which Agatha replied in the following manner :—

“ I am perfectly well, Claribelle, but I confess that I have been disturbed by the wanderings of a restless and feverish dream, which still bears a fearful impression on my memory ; for though I know that it was only a dream, yet it was a frightful one.”

“ My dear, dear young lady,” cried Claribelle, “ an you will frighten me if you talk so ; you look pale too, and your eyes are heavy ! Heaven preserve and ever keep you out of harm’s way, I say ! bless your tender heart, you have suffered enough already at your age, and I do truly hope that all your troubles are now over ! I have had dreams too, but I never told you about any of them, because I thought they would only make you uneasy.”

“ And yet it is very foolish to indulge in such weakness,” answered Agatha, “ and entertain fears that have no existence but in fancy.”

Claribelle, who was accustomed to water the flowers every morning, of which Agatha was extremely fond, and had a choice collection, which she had cultivated with great care and brought with her from the cliff, had just taken up the watering pot in her hands, and was about to commence her daily occupa-

tion, when looking beneath the casement she perceived a beautiful double-blossomed myrtle tree, in full bloom, which was not in the collection of Agatha's favourite plants, and an involuntary exclamation escaped her lips, of—

"Miss Agatha, you never told me you had this beautiful myrtle ! where have you hid it all this while from my observation ? and how long may you have had it in your collection."

"Myrtle !" repeated Agatha, "you are dreaming, Claribelle ! I know of no myrtle except the one we left behind us at the cliff, and have certainly had no myrtle given me since I have been here."

"There is one, however," cried Claribelle ; "look, Miss Agatha, and convince yourself that I have got my eyes ; here is the most beautiful myrtle tree I ever saw in my born days, placed exactly under the window, with your geraniums ! Look, and I protest there is a slip of paper tied round the middle ! that is as much as to let us know who it comes from, I suppose."

The first thought that suggested itself to the mind of Agatha when she beheld this mysterious gift, was, that it was some artful stratagem of the insidious Craftly, who, to answer some wily purpose, had contrived to place the myrtle there for her acceptance, either to worm himself into her good graces, knowing her passion for flowers, or to excite a jealousy in the hearts of the rival sisters ; and if so, she determined to avail herself of an opportunity of returning it, and proudly to reject the so offered present.

With this thought uppermost in her mind, and with this intention, she desired Claribelle to reach out her hand, and unfasten the slip of paper, which was affixed to the middle of the blooming tree.

"I know the hand-writing of Craftly," thought Agatha, "but he is mistaken, if he imagines that I will be the dupe of his artful contrivances, or consent to aid in destroying the peace of two individuals so dear to the heart of my protector."

Meanwhile Claribelle, delighted with her mission, and betraying no small symptoms of curiosity to be informed who had presented her young mistress with so beautiful a gift, very soon reached her prize, and placing the slip of paper in the hands of Aga-

tha, very eagerly and anxiously watched her countenance as she impatiently run over the contents, which, to the utter astonishment of Agatha, was written in characters entirely unknown to her, and contained the following lines :

Trust not the rose or lily's hue,
Altho' they sweets impart,
For they are changlings unto you,
And hide a changing heart.

But take the form this myrtle wears,
In silence, lovely maid ;
'Twill stand the test of lengthen'd years,
'When beauty is decay'd.

Yes, when the with'ring blast shall blow
The young rose from thy cheek,
And all the world shall let thee know
That flatt'ry will not speak.

Then take the leaf that's ever green,
Whose blossom is thine own ;
For he who gave the gift unseen
Must live for thee alone.*

Agatha had certainly read these lines aloud, much to the delight and satisfaction of the listening and curious Claribelle, and various conjectures filled the minds of both as to the writer of them. They were evidently not Craftly's, and suspicion immediately rested on the invisible speaker, who had been stationed beneath the window on the preceding night, but this was a circumstance wholly unknown to the attendant, and she exclaimed, on Agatha's folding up the paper and depositing it carefully in her pocket-book.

" Well, I protest, I never heard sweeter verses in my life, Miss Agatha, and let the writer be whoever he will, it is plain enough that he is over head and ears in love with you ; that's no great wonder to be sure, for you are worthy of being beloved by the finest man that ever wore a head ; so there's nothing to be won-

* Original poetry.

dered at in that ; but the wonder is—who is he ? It cannot be Mr. Craftily, you know, Miss Agatha, because he has got a sweetheart already ; and it cannot be Mr. Sam Russel, the young handsome fisher, that lives at the bank-side ; so being neither the one or the other, why who can it be ?”

To which Agatha thoughtfully replied, for she was thinking of her mysterious visiter :

“ I really do not know, nor am I exceedingly solicitous to learn ; I do not approve of any thing that approaches in a mysterious shape toward me.”

“ Well, miss, I dare say that it is in the shape of a man,” cried Claribelle ; “ and it is very unlikely that he would do you any harm, when he can make such pretty verses on you ; at all events, it would be a great pity to let the beautiful myrtle tree perish for want of a drop of water, so I will e’en give it some, if you please.”

“ I have no objection to your doing that,” returned Agatha, “ but a very great one to its remaining beneath the window of this chamber ; you must this night remove it hence. I will give a colour to no clandestine proceedings in the house of my protector, to whom I am under the necessity (whether I like it or not) of disclosing this incident, which, however trifling, it would be imprudent in me to conceal from his knowledge.”

Claribelle was silent, as she generally was when she could not easily or readily adopt her young mistress’s opinion ; she did not see why the myrtle tree should not remain in its present situation ; besides, she was dying with curiosity to know whose hands had placed it there, and if taken away, it was very probable that this was a secret that she might never get to the bottom of. Still Claribelle was obliged to conform to the commands of her mistress, and to rigidly perform them.

Meanwhile Agatha no sooner made her appearance below stairs, to which she was summoned to breakfast, than she related all that she knew of this mysterious circumstance, produced from her pocket-book the written lines, and of having heard some one under the chamber window on the preceding night.

“ Shiver my top-sails !” cried the fisher “ if ever I heard of
No. 7.

such an impudent scoundrel in existence ; why, my dear Miss Singleton, I should not be surprised if to-night the moon-struck hero was to bring a ladder and ropes, and affix them to the window, in the hopes of carrying you off—but, zounds, I will take pretty good care to give the brazen dog no chance of doing that, I warrant him ; if I catch him there again, he shall meet with a warm reception,—I will have my double-barrelled gun ready to pop at him in the crack of a whip."

"Heaven forbid, my dear Sir, that you should have recourse to such violent measures on my account ;" cried Agatha, in some alarm, "I should deeply regret that any one should be wounded or injured in so silly an affair."

"And it would be quite ridiculous, father," cried Olive, "for you to think of shooting a man, merely because he had a mind to make Miss Singleton a present of a beautiful myrtle tree, and to write some pretty verses on her ; for my part, I should not think myself at all offended by receiving such a compliment."

"You silly toad, and do you call that a compliment," uttered the fisher, "climbing up to the top of a house to put a myrtle tree at a chamber window, and scribbling a parcel of verses, without letting people know where it comes from ?"

"Yes, father, that is the beauty of it," returned Olive, "it would not be half so romantic or pretty if one was to know where it came from, or who wrote it ; but, dear me, now it is quite like a novel, and sets one a longing, and a longing, till one gets the whole of the secret out of the bag."

"Like a fiddlestick's end," cried the fisher, "that is all you think of, novels, and plays, and dream-books, and all such idle nonsense ; but shiver my top-sails, if ever I catch another novel in your hands, I'll put it behind the fire."

"Then why does Miss Singleton read novels, if they are so ridiculous," inquired Olive, glad to oppose her father in any argument, that tended to lessen his opinion of the extraordinary merits of one whom he was constantly setting before her as a pattern. "Come, Miss Singleton, pray tell father why you read novels, as they are called, if they are so improper ?"

Agatha now saw the envious, not to say the malicious, triumph

which now scornfully played on the lips of Olive, and without betraying the least embarrassment, warmly replied,—

“ I will satisfy you, Miss Blust, in this particular, if indeed you are so exceedingly anxious to learn, and without departing from the possibility of your father's assertion, that novels are sometimes injurious, when they do not inculcate morality and truth ; but this is not generally the case, and for the most part I have always found them to convey both amusement and instruction, and why not ? Has not a novelist the picture of life before him, does he not copy the living manners as they rise exalted to virtue, or sink debased by vice ? And why should virtue and vice be portrayed in one book rather than in another ; and if it tends to improvement and morality by a just portrait drawn of the human character, what does it matter what the book be called ? Virtue is virtue, and vice is vice, call it what you please ; wormwood would taste bitter were it not called so, and a rose would smell as sweet, had it any other name. Neither are novels prejudicial more than any other compositions ; if the writers have not made them so, they can do no harm. While, on the other hand, a sermon may be capable of corrupting the heart, and perverting and blinding the understanding, by leading us to entertain a mistaken notion of our religion ; but this must certainly depend on the principle it conveys, and the manner in which it is conveyed by the preacher. So are novels, when improperly written ; but they can have no improper bias surely, when they inculcate humanity, principle and feeling.”

The fisher was in raptures at the conclusion of this modest and ingenuous confession, as well as explanation, on the subject of which he had before been always in doubt and prejudice, but like mists before the rising sun, they now suddenly vanished, so effective was the influence which the lovely orphan possessed over his mind ; and the disappointed Olive only beheld in the countenance of her father a smile, beaming with the utmost satisfaction on the eloquent and beautiful speaker ; and with a sneer, which looked more like envy than any thing else, she exclaimed,—

“ Now, father, I suppose that Jessie and I may read as many novels as we please, since they are licensed by an act passed in the reign of Miss Agatha Singleton.”

Agatha coloured deeply, from a consciousness of how little she had merited the bitter envy which was contained in this speech; but determined that it should not have the effect for which it was evidently designed by the malicious Olive, she suppressed the rising and involuntary disgust she felt toward her, and only smilingly replied, in answer to her observation,—

“Would that indeed I possessed the power you have ascribed to me, Miss Blust, there is no act of mine at which I hope I should have cause to blush, or would incur the censure or severity of my enemies, much less draw on me the unmerited reproach of my friends.”

“And had England such a queen, Miss Singleton, I am inclined to think there would be little cause for murmuring against the state, or to doubt the loyalty of the British subjects,” cried the fisher, “for there would be only one voice among them, and that would be decidedly in favour of their beloved sovereign.”

The arrival of Craftly at Herring Dale, with his sister Margaret, who had come to pay a friendly visit to her young kinswomen, now very opportunely put an end to a conversation which was beginning to grow very disagreeable to the envious feelings of Miss Blust, as it incontestibly proved how high the merits of Miss Singleton ranked in the estimation of her father, and how great was the influence she held over his mind, of which Olive was particularly jealous, when she reflected that her sister Jessy was also estranged from her affections, since Miss Singleton had become an inmate of the Dale, and that even the very servants paid her a respect and homage which they were very far from showing to her; and all but Leontine Craftly considered her as a paragon of perfection; he, for some cause or other, had always evaded giving his opinion on the merits of Agatha, though frequently asked by Olive, in various directions, whether he did not think her handsome, his reply was invariably the same,—“She does not look like you;” and perhaps these words were accompanied by certain looks, which never failed to make an impression on the weak heart of the too credulous girl. Thus every hour she was becoming the easy victim of the smooth-tongued libertine, for such Leontine Craftly undoubtedly was:—fain would we deny the asser-

tion, but truth, like the monitor of conscience, forbids us to stray beyond her sacred boundaries: it was even so. Still Olive was not always contented with receiving this general reply from Craftly, on the subject of Miss Singleton, and although it was very certain, that she did not look like her, and that there was not the slightest resemblance between them, yet Olive thought to be like Miss Singleton would have been a compliment she would have preferred to any other, and affecting an air of the most perfect indifference, one morning that she was left chatting with her kinsman, she exclaimed,—

“There is Jessy and her favourite gone out a walking together; pretty souls! they are just like two beans upon a stalk, quite inseparable—well, I don’t envy the pleasure of their conversation, I promise you, for they are always talking about books and the beauties of nature, as Miss Singleton calls it; now I hate books, except they are some amusing novels, and as for the beauties of nature, I never think it worth my while to study them, not I; but Jessy—”

“Is a blossom of nature herself,” cried Craftly, suppressing a sigh, which, at any other time, would have occasioned him to reflect seriously for a moment on the striking contrast there was in the characters of the two sisters; but this was not a period for reflection, when he beheld so beautiful a girl as Olive almost ready to jump into his arms only for the asking, and of whose affections he was perfectly secure; and he added with a playful smile, perceiving that Olive looked grave,—

“And are not you too a blossom of nature, my sweetest Olive? Behold that blooming rose, which no art could ever pencil, on that lovely cheek, and the whiteness of the lily is on thy fair breast; tell me, then, if thou art not a blossom of nature in all its fullest sweets.”

Olive blushed, for Craftly uttered this with the most impassioned look of fondness, which it was impossible for her to mistake, and to which he added other compliments equally flattering to her youthful vanity; still, however, she artfully adverted to her favourite subject, by affecting to feel the utmost astonishment at his indifference to the merits of her father’s protégé. At which Craftly carelessly answered.

"We were talking of beauty, my dear Olive, not of merit, and to that of Miss Singleton I am nearly a total stranger, for how should I know the merits of that extraordinary young lady, who scarcely condescends to bestow a look, or a word, on any but your father and Jessy."

"Why that is very true," replied Olive; "but then we don't talk much to her, you know, nor do we pay her much attention. As to father, he perfectly adores her; and Miss Jessy too thinks her a wonder, and has the impudence to set her up for a pattern to both of us; but I should be glad to know who Miss Singleton is, that every body is to make her a model, whether they like it or not. Then she pretends to be such a prude too; do you know that she was quite offended the other day, only because Sam Russel, who is such a frolicsome young man that we cannot help laughing at him, just touched her hand, and pretended that he would kiss it. If you had seen how she coloured up in a moment, and would not so much as give him a civil look for several days afterwards. 'Lord, Sam,' cried I, when she went out of the room with Jessy, 'how can you be such a simpleton as to mind what Miss Singleton says.' And what do you think was the fool's reply?"

"I really cannot positively guess;" answered Craftly, who, in spite of his utmost art to disguise his feelings, seemed interested in this account that Olive was giving of the behaviour of Miss Singleton to Sam Russel, who was one of his most familiar friends and companions.

"Why I will own that it very much surprised me," resumed Olive, "for he said, 'indeed but I do mind what she says, Miss Olive; for I would not offend Miss Singleton to please my father, or the best friend I had in existence; she is so sweet and sensible a girl, and I deserve to be hanged for presuming to take such a liberty with her. I might have known that she would be angry, but I will go and ask her pardon this moment, and never, never offend her again.'"

"Indeed!" cried Craftly, with a sneer, while the colour mounted in deep crimson to his cheeks; "Sam took care never to tell me of this, so I imagine he has fallen desperately in love with

this wonder-working goddess, who seems to have turned the heads and the hearts of every body, except you and I, Olive."

Olive was silent; she had marked the rising colour on the cheek of Craftily, and she saw too, that the admiring eyes with which his friend Sam apparently regarded Miss Singleton, was not a subject of much pleasure to him; and that he seemed suddenly plunged into a thoughtful reverie, from which not even she had the power to awaken him, or charm away by her usual fascinating smiles; and, almost unconscious that Olive was present, he muttered to himself,—

"So, Sam is caught too, by the witchery of this syren;—it is well! the proud girl thinks she cannot hold too many captives in her chains."

"What syren are you speaking of Leontine?" demanded Olive, smiling, and laying her beautiful hand on his shoulder. And, instantly recovering his self-possession, the hypocrite replied,—

"Why a syren, Olive, is a—a—a sort of a dangerous—tempting—no, not tempting, I did not mean that—a mischievous thing, I intended to say, in the shape of a female; that sometimes unaccountably seduces and charms the hearts of men, so forcibly, so powerfully, that they have no power of escaping from the spells which they spread around them."

"And are there no male syrens of this description as well," cried Olive, in an offended tone; and so you choose to apply this epithet to Miss Singleton; really, Sir, it is a great pity that the syren is not here to listen to your compliments."

"And if she were here, she would not thank me for it, my sweetest Olive," uttered the insidious Craftily; "for when I called her syren, I meant to imply any thing else but a compliment. No, Olive, be assured, my dear girl, that Miss Singleton is the last object under Heaven, whom I would address in the style of compliment; and I should be the last object from whom, perhaps, she would bear it. She knows I do not flatter her, and consequently does not covet my society; and she is right, for I shall never court her's."

From lips we love, we do not easily suspect the want of sincerity, or doubt the flattering tale, so oft, so melodiously told, and so

frequently repeated ; and Olive confided in the sincerity of Craftily, when he at last gave this his avowed opinion of Agatha Singleton ; for how could she doubt of his assertions, that he did not like or admire her, when the coldness and distance of his manners toward her, had given a colour of truth to his every word and action ? in all that related to Miss Singleton he had evinced the most perfect indifference ; and Olive again believed that it really was so ; but whether it really was or no, time will yet unfold—that, and greater mysteries : sufficient to say, that at the present moment Olive and Craftily parted friends, and certainly lovers ; for in that character, and that only, he had always taught her to consider him.

And in what did he appear to Jessy ? why, unquestionably the same ; he had always told Jessy, that she was the idol of his heart, and Jessy too believed him.

It was reserved alone for Agatha to remove the flimsy veil from Jessy's eyes, and to let her behold the mirror of truth ; nor could Jessy turn aside from it when she did behold it.

It was a sickening picture that so suddenly met her gaze, but it was drawn in the colours of a faithful artist, and Jessy could not doubt but it was original ; and though she suffered pangs in tearing it from her heart, she was wise in the resolution of never again permitting it to retain a place there ; but alas ! the conviction of the faithlessness of the being in whom she had placed such implicit confidence, weighed heavily on the sensibility of the sweet Jessy, and in retired moments, when hid from the observation of all mortal eyes, when none but pitying angels could witness her silent sorrow and her heart-felt grief, the apostacy of Leontine frequently occasioned her to shed the most bitter tears, and she would mentally exclaim,—Ab, if such be the cruel arts and deceptions of men toward our hapless and unfortunate sex ! if they can indeed, offer vows only to betray the fond believing victims, whom they afterward abandon to their fate ! grant to me, Eternal Judge and Father of all created universe, that I may never again become the dupe of another's perjured vows ! or regard protestations and promises which even the holy principles of our sacred religion had not the power of making hallowed and pure ! and thou too, my

sister, thy heart must bleed, perhaps, from the same source that mine bleeds now. Perhaps thou art destined to feel the apostacy of thy lover too ;—thy lover ! said he not that he was mine—Did he not swear it, and call upon heaven to witness the sincerity of his vows ? False, injurious Leontine ! how couldst thou play a part so treacherously cruel and deceitful ?

Alas ! Jessy could only answer this question with her tears ; and, such a baneful influence had these mournful and unhappy reflections on her spirits, that, in spite of all her efforts to appear tranquil and composed, they gradually made the most alarming appearance on her lovely person, and soon the rose began to fade on her fair cheek, her form to lose its freshness and elasticity, her brilliant blue eyes to sink in languor, and her sweet voice no longer to retain its lively tone. In vain had Leontine sought for an opportunity to inquire into the cause, and renew his vows of unalterable affection ; in vain did he endeavour to steal a glance from those lovely orbs whose light he had diminished, and which, till now, had ever beamed with kindness and confidence on him ; but Jessy was resolute, and evaded the sight of her perfidious lover, while Olive endeavoured to wring the secret of her heart by every means in her power, but in vain ; nor were the eyes of her fond father blind to the melancholy change he beheld in the darling of his heart, and frequently, when alone with Agatha, would mention the alteration in Jessy with the most heart-felt grief. To which Agatha would always reply, when she could no longer evade the subject by any other means :

“ My dear Sir, you cannot imagine how you distress my feelings, in supposing that I withheld from you any communication which it would be proper for you to know, respecting the altered health and spirits of our sweet Jessy ; she is, indeed, not so lively as she used to be, nor does she look quite so freshly ; but she will recover that, and——” Agatha had never found it so difficult to finish a sentence, and colouring deeply, added, “ will soon be herself again.”

“ Shiver my top-sails ! but that wont do ;” cried the fisher, in a voice of unusual impatience.

"What won't do, my good Sir?" repeated Agatha half smiling.

"Evasion;" answered the fisher, boldly, "evasion, from you, my dear Miss Singleton, won't do in any shape whatever; you either know, or guess at the cause of the change in my poor Jessy, and you don't choose to tell me, that's plain—and you won't tell me, though you see a father's heart breaking at the sight of her dear pale cheeks and hollow eyes, that were once as bright as—" (Here the fisher, unable to proceed, passed his hand suddenly across his brow, to conceal a gust of tears which now involuntarily rushed from his eyes.) "But no matter, if I lose my Jessy, I shall die of a broken heart, and there will be an end of both of us!—yes, poor old Peter will die of a broken heart, at last!—I, who never suffered a heart to ache in my born days, without trying to take the load away from it.—Well, well, no matter; Olive won't cry much after me, and you Agatha Singleton——"

"Would be the veriest wretch in existence," cried Agatha, much affected, "Could I add to those sufferings, which by any effort of mine I could spare you the trial of.—Oh! my protector, my more than father! why do you thus reproach the unhappy orphan, on whose head you have so long showered down blessings, never to be erased from her memory; if with my life I could repay them, it is at your service; if by the sacrifice of any happiness which springs from myself, you would prove my heartfelt gratitude towards you, you are freely welcome to take all that is within my reach,—but, in pity, do not reproach me for what it is not in my power to remedy or alter."

"Then, do you know the secret that wrings the heart of my poor Jessy?" uttered the fisher, bestowing a look on Agatha which uttered volumes, "and, perhaps Olive knows it, and perhaps my kinsman Craftly knows it, and Margaret too,—yet her father is not to know it;—shiver my top-sails, but this is strange."

"Hear me, Sir," cried Agatha, now deeply roused to a just sense of who they had sprung from, and with a look of calm and dignified composure, which arrested the attention of the fisher irresistibly in her favour, and to listen to her with a deference which no human being would have commanded but her, "hear me Sir, patiently," again repeated she, "if you can, for you must

‘have patience before I can at all explain myself to your entire satisfaction.’”

“Say what you please, my dear girl, say what you please,” uttered the fisher, waving his hand as if for her to proceed, “for, shiver my top-sails, if I would listen to any one else with half the pleasure, and I could give myself a sound drubbing for having said a word to vex so sweet a little soul as I know you to be.—But, my Jessy, my poor Jessy!—go on, my dear girl, go on,—I won’t interrupt you again, I promise you. Come dearest, what are you going to say?”

“I was going to say, Sir,” cried Agatha, hardly able to resist smiling at the transitions which the poor fisher had made, of asperity to kindness, and petulance to his own natural sweetness of temper, “that when your humanity prompted you to offer an asylum beneath your roof to a poor fatherless girl, that she was bound, not only in gratitude and affection to you, but to every member of your family, to preserve the same principle and feeling by conscientiously discharging her duty, and what does that duty tell me, Sir?—that the peace, the happiness, the honour, the welfare of your children should be as dear to me as my own, and that when I behold any evil pending on them, that I could by any means avert, that I would fearlessly throw myself between that and them, let whatever be the consequence.—Sir, this duty I have performed,—one of your children was in danger of a threatened evil—it was Jessy.”

“Jessy!” exclaimed the fisher, in the utmost astonishment.

“Yes, Jessy,” repeated Agatha, “it was Jessy, over whose innocent head this evil was waving;—it was my fortunate destiny to perceive that evil in time to warn her of it;—I did not wring the secret from her heart, but she reposed it in mine! Now, Sir, hear my fixed, my unalterable resolution, never to reveal this secret, till permitted by her to do so, though I lose, what I prize dearer than existence, the affection, the esteem, the protection of my benefactor. Cease to urge or importune me again on this subject, but be satisfied, that your daughter is now safe from being perverted from her duty, and that a short time will restore her to her former health and cheerfulness; her form has indeed chang-

ed, but unchanged and incorruptible are her principles,—chaste and pure as holy angels. Thus far have I ventured to explain the nature of her late despondency, but no farther; and, if indeed you do regard the little good I still can do in this mysterious business, remember that your silence only can sign the passport to my duty."

The fisher continued gazing at Agatha for many minutes after she had ceased speaking, with a mixture of astonishment and concern, which almost deprived him of the power of utterance, in which admiration of her exemplary conduct seemed to have no small share; while the communication he had received relative to his beloved child, had so powerfully wrought upon his feelings as to occasion him to burst into an involuntary agony of tears, and Agatha, imagining that he was not yet fully satisfied with the explanation she had given him, and was still angry with her, exclaimed,—

"Speak to me, Sir, do but speak to me; your silence breaks my heart, tell me that I am justified in your opinion, and I care not what else betides me."

"Justified," at length uttered the fisher, regarding her with a look of the tenderest emotion, "shiver my top-sails, you are an angel! yes, Agatha Singleton, you are an angel, and blessed be the hour that I brought you within these doors. I have let my girls do just what they please with me, but my Jessy was the pride of my heart, and had she fallen into any temptation, I should never have held my head up again; but I will believe you, Agatha, Jessy is still innocent, and she droops because some faithless lover has deceived her,—but, the scoundrel, the infernal scoundrel, never let me know his name Agatha,—never let me hear his name pronounced in my presence, or belike I may——yes, I would pulverize him into atoms!—what, to creep into the bosom of my blooming rosebud, and like a vile reptile, only to destroy its sweets! Zounds, I shall go mad!—Oh, Jessy, Jessy, better had these grey hairs followed thee to thy grave, for then, my darling, I know thou wouldst have been an angel translated to the skies."

"And Jessy is an angel still," cried Agatha, dreadfully alarm-

ed at the excessive agitation she beheld in the countenance of her protector ; " I will stake my life on Jessy's innocence, and I beseech you, Sir, to calm and moderate these transports ; by all my hopes of happiness hereafter, Jessy is innocent, and free from censure, and will soon be happy again in a father's smiles, be but silent, on that alone depends her restoration to health and peace."

" Well, well, I will be silent," cried the fisher, " though shiver my top-sails, it would be a hard matter, if I knew who it was that——but, come, dearest, I will distress thee no longer, and will say nothing more about it ; but pray watch over my darling, bid her not weep, and sigh, and moan so ; tell her it will break her father's heart, to see her pine,—do this, love, as often as you can, and, may angels bless you !

" Be assured that I will neglect nothing which can contribute to her welfare, and the peace of her father," answered Agatha ; and leaving him considerably relieved from the apprehensions which had at first filled his mind on Jessy's account, she retired to her own chamber, to contemplate the delicate situation in which she now stood in the fisher's family, and the little prospect there was for her enjoying any tranquillity again, beneath a roof, the happiness of which was already broken in upon by the insidious and base arts of a designing villain !

Still, however, Agatha forbore to repeat his name to his kinsman, on whom he had so artfully imposed, but to which it was scarcely possible to suppose that the fisher would long be blind ; but Agatha, almost unerring in her judgment in all beside, was completely deceived in this respect ; for so far from suspecting Leontine Craftly to be the cause of Jessy's unhappiness, or being at all instrumental in destroying the peace of his family, he believed Craftly to be as indifferent to Jessy as a stranger who had never crossed his threshold, and that he thought no more for Olive than the mere regard which was attached to their being relatives on his mother's side. In short, the fisher looked higher than to Leontine Craftly for a matrimonial connection in his family ; for though he loved him as a kinsman, and would probably do much to serve him, yet for a husband to either of his daughters, he would proudly have rejected any overtures which would have been

made of the kind; and how was it morally possible for the fisher to have even guessed at an attachment subsisting between Leontine and his daughter Jessy? for never had he observed the slightest partiality on either side. Jessy hardly addressed any conversation to Leontine, and Leontine seldom exchanged a syllable with Jessy, except on the most general and indifferent subjects, and then it was always in the presence of others; and of Olive's flightiness with her kinsman, the fisher thought nothing, since he believed she would do the same with any other young man who had been so familiarly brought up with her. Thus were all the little flirtations which were carried on between them wholly unnoticed, or if noticed, only laughed at, by a too indulgent father.

Meanwhile the insidious Craftly gradually stole into the good graces of his unsuspecting kinsman, who at length, reposing the utmost confidence in the seeming semblance of so many virtuous traits of character and disposition, believed that few young men were possessed of such integrity and honourable principles as his kinsman, and this confidence had increased rather than diminished with increasing years.

It would therefore have been no easy matter to have convinced the warm-hearted fisher, that Craftly was a designing hypocrite, much less that he could be the seducer of one or both of his children, had opportunity and his insidious arts succeeded to accomplish his base and dishonourable purposes.

But of Craftly the confiding fisher thought not, when at the departure of Agatha, he ransacked his memory to guess at the serpent who had undermined the happiness of his sweet Jessy. There were few young men who had the privilege of being constant visitors at Herring Dale, besides Craftly and Russel, whose characters and principles would not stand the test of the most scrupulous inquiry, and which were not fully established in the neighbourhood of Cromer, and the fisher was well assured that none of those would presume to approach his daughters with a dishonourable passion.

"Well, then, who was this serpent, whose wily tongue had stung the heart of his Jessy?"

Agatha Singleton could answer that question, but she had given

her reasons why she was not permitted to do so ; they were strange—they were mysterious ! for it was by the heaven-directed agency of Agatha that Jessy had been warned of her fate ; it was plain then, that the perfidious lover of Jessy was not unknown to Miss Singleton ; but, unable to form the remotest conjecture that could authorize him to suspect any one who was intimate at the Dale, he suspended his judgment till some conclusive evidence might assist him in discovering the villain.

CHAPTER XV.

" Oh, love ! what is it in this world of our's
Which makes it fatal to be lov'd ? ah ! why
With cypress branches that thou wreath'd thy bowers,
And made thy best interpreter a sigh ?
As those who dote on odours pluck the flowers
And place them on their breast—but place to die.—
Thus, the frail beings we would fondly cherish,
Are laid within our bosoms, but to perish !"

Time, which brings all things, all seasons, and all changes to an end, whether sweet or sour, was rapidly advancing to that, which was annually calculated by the inhabitants of Cromer for the period of a rich and luxuriant harvest, all their own, because they had looked forward to it with many an anxious sigh, and the deprivation of many a pleasure, which their scanty means could not afford ; during the long and tedious reign of winter, dried fish, and a very moderate supply of inferior herrings, with a less proportion of other food, had been the subsistence of numerous poor families, who had drained their little store, gained by hard labour, in order to prepare ready furnished apartments in their houses, for the reception and accommodation of the yearly visitors and sea-bathers, who never failed to resort to their coast on the approach of summer ; and if this poor, honest, and industrious race of people were then rewarded for the sacrifices which they had so patiently endured throughout a long and wintry season, who would

grudge them the price of their hire, that had full purses and open hearts? and yet there were hearts, and there were purses, which were never opened but to wants of their own > wants do we call them?—no, they were not wants, for nature requires but little; they were luxuries, idle and fantastical luxuries, which bloated affluence imagines that it cannot do without, and that it has the sole right to enjoy; and while to real want it is a stranger, how should it either know or feel for those unfortunate beings, who are alone familiar with poverty, and to whom the name of luxury is unknown. Being warmed themselves in the sunny ray of splendour, even till they sicken beneath its beam, how can they feel the icy chill of the cold and bitter blast of poverty? Ask the African, born beneath the influence of the burning clime, if he can feel his limbs benumbed with Lapland's freezing snows, or shiver with the wintry blast blowing round his head, and he will tell you,—no! Neither can one human being appreciate the wants, the miseries, the feelings of another, till they themselves have drank at the bitter fountain.

Well, then, to return to the inhabitants of Cromer, and the fashionable sea-bathers, who did not, we will suppose, come there to save money, but to spend it, and, having plenty, they could afford it; at length the influx of company was so great, that not a bed was to be procured at any of the inns, however humble or obscure; every lodging was completely crammed, and many families who could not obtain room for their establishment were under the necessity of taking apartments in houses situated at a most inconvenient distance from the town.

It was no wonder, then, that in this extremity, applications poured in from all quarters for the beautiful Cottage on the Cliff, and that several personages of rank and fashion inquired of Mr. Adams, at the library, the terms of accommodation; of which, being fully informed, it was immediately followed by an application to the fisher himself. A splendid carriage arrived one morning at Herring Dale, and the name of Mr. Blust being inquired for at the gate, by a footman in a superb livery, David came running into the parlour to apprise his master of his distinguished visitors, which was no other than the Marchioness of Montault herself, La-

dy Lavinia, and a third lady, deeply veiled, and who did not choose to alight: for the fisher had instantly made his bow to their ladyships, and invited them in, where only Olive was sitting at work, and, on the entrance of their splendid visitants, she arose, and curtsying respectfully, was going to retire, had not the Marchioness entreated that she would not disturb herself on her account.

"Your daughter, I presume, Mr. Blust," exclaimed her Ladyship, and seating herself without ceremony, immediately entered into the business on which she came, namely, to engage the Cottage on the Cliff; "not for myself as you may imagine, Mr. Blust," uttered she, "for I cannot endure any thing half so romantic as this cottage is described, so lonely too, standing by itself on the sea-shore; I positively should die of the vapours were I condemned to endure such solitary exile. I have a perfect antipathy to the loneliness of solitude, be the prospects ever so boundless or enchanting. Well, it is not for myself that I am going to negotiate, so it does not matter, but for a friend, a lady of quality and distinction, newly arrived from the continent, who, if she finds the cottage answering the romantic description which has been given of it, will doubtless become your tenant a considerable length of time. The terms which Adams stated to us are by no means objectionable;—the point is,—is the cottage duly prepared for the reception of a lady of distinction, Mr. Blust?—by the by, it belonged to a person of the name Singleton, who was unfortunately drowned there, did not it? I have heard something about it, but the story was so melancholy, I could not bear to listen to it. I have an antipathy to all melancholy stories." Here the Marchioness ceased speaking; from the very first moment since she had made her entrance, till now, there had been no chance of the fisher being able to edge in a word, much less to answer the interrogations which her ladyship had so rapidly made, but the ice being now broke, he ventured to begin in the following manner:—

"Yes, my lady, I believe you will find that the Cottage on the Cliff is exactly the thing, the very thing for dull and melancholy folks to live in. The wind blows like the devil, when there is a gale or a tempest, and the waves will, wash over the chimney tops,

No 8.

as nicely as a herring skiff skips over the ocean,—then there is plenty of sea-fowl to keep watch over the premises,—I have seen as many gulls there as would freight a ship; but the captain did not mind these things a whistle, so the winds might blow, and the birds might shriek, he was never the man to fright them away from their lonely habitation; and as to his daughter, heaven bless her, she would not touch a fly with her little soft hand, if she thought she should hurt it. So, as I was saying, my lady, that the captain enjoyed all these melancholy things, he was a melancholy man, and purchased the cottage of me, when it was not worth a rope's yarn, and was ready to tumble about his ears, on purpose that he might have it built up again according to his fancy, and indulge in all his melancholy whims, and read books, and look at the stars, and the moon, and the sea, and all those sort of things;—but, poor fellow, he did not enjoy his fancies long, he was lost in that terrible gale of wind that wrecked a ship upon this coast, and made me the father of two as fine boys as ever your ladyship beheld in your born days."

"Well, I protest, that it is prodigiously kind of you, Mr. Blust," cried the Marchioness, "it is not every one who would have liked to receive so great an addition to their family,—for I am told that the orphan daughter of this Singleton lives beneath your roof too, and is supported by your bounty; her father no doubt left her quite destitute. A strange character, Adams tells me, this Captain Singleton, whom he supposes, from his extraordinary retired habits, and gloomy mode of living, to have had some singular reason for becoming such a recluse,—perhaps you have heard;"—the Marchioness stopt on the eager stretch of curiosity, but during the whole of this speech the colour of the fisher had gradually arose to his cheek, till his broad, round, good-natured face was in a perfect blaze, and he bluntly replied,—

"I have heard nothing, my lady, that can reflect on the character of that quiet, modest, peaceable, though melancholy man, and if this be the only fault that he had, I shall pray night and morning, that I may descend to my grave with as little."

A pause ensued, not much to the satisfaction of the talkative Marchioness, but exceedingly so to the feelings of the warm-heart-

ed fisher, who felt that he had done his duty in speaking thus of his departed friend ; he had no faults that had come within the precincts of his knowledge, or if he had, why should he rake them up from the ashes of the dead, where they reposed in silence, till a better judge than him should call them to account. It was the pleasure of the beautiful Marchioness, however, again to revive the unpleasing subject, which was beginning to impose a heavy tax on the patience of the fisher, whom it is well known did not possess any considerable share, and she exclaimed,—

“ So, then, the Cottage on the Cliff appears to be the property of this Miss Singleton.”

“ Appears, my lady,” rapidly replied the fisher, “ it is hers, and, shiver my top-sails, if I know any one who has a right to question her claim to it ; it was her father's money that purchased it, and if she has not a right to it now he is dead and gone, I don't know who has, that is all.”

The Marchioness coloured deeply, and looked at Lady Lavinia, with something like surprise at the bluntness of the fisher, who she expected would have thought it necessary to have used more ceremony with a personage of her exalted rank, but in this her ladyship was mistaken, for the fisher was independent of exalted rank, and neither valued the smiles or feared the frowns of the great ones.

He had never hung on them for the support or the promotion of his family, never obtained their fallacious promises, or solicited their patronage ; he had been a tub standing on its own bottom,—an oak in the forest, which had never yielded to the rough blast, though it had spent its fury round his head, still he had stood firm and undaunted in the midst of the storm. All the wealth he had acquired was by hard labour and persevering industry, and if the fisher found at last that he had met with a reward adequate to the meritorious exertions he had made for the maintenance of himself and family, he felt that he owed it to a higher source than from the power, or the gifts, which were placed in the hands of earthly creatures. And knowing this, he scorned to favour or flatter their several vices ; in short, the unsophisticated Peter could not see the necessity of the Marchioness being so inquisitive on a subject

which did not at all concern her ; for if poverty was, indeed, the lot of Agatha Singleton, it was not the hand of the Marchioness that would be stretched out to relieve her, for generosity was not in the catalogue of the Marchioness's virtues.

Meanwhile the illustrious lady had arose from her seat, having first closed the bargain with the fisher, for her friend, the lady before-mentioned, to take immediate possession of the Cottage on the Cliff, at an early hour the ensuing morning, at which hour the keys were to be delivered up to the new servant, and the agreement signed by each of the parties ; after which her ladyship departed from the house of the fisher, much in the way she had come, without ceremony, and the fisher, well pleased that he had made so advantageous a bargain for his dear little protégé, forgot to remark that the Marchioness was a prodigious fine woman, and Lady Lavinia was a lovelier one.

He could not tell whether their eyes were black, blue, or green, or whether their complexions were only ordinary, transparently fine. Not Peter ; he had been thinking on something else all the while the Marchioness had been in the room, and that was, in calculating on the profits that Agatha would receive from having such a tenant in the Cottage on the Cliff ; and that the lady, when she knew the orphan state of Agatha, might probably be induced to act still more liberally toward her, not but what the terms were handsome enough.

These were the reflections which occupied the mind of the fisher, so as to render him blind to the fascinating glare of all-powerful beauty, set off by all the adventitious aid of the most costly attire ; but not so blind had been the bright eyes of Olive, she had stole side-long glances both at the dress of the Marchioness, and that also of the Lady Lavinia ; she could tell to a nicety how long and how short the waists were of their gowns, what sort of sleeves, and what coloured trimmings were attached to each ; she could exactly guess by her eye of what materials their bonnets were made, faithfully to transmit this important discovery to Miss Murry, the milliner, in order that at some stolen opportunity she might fashion her one of the same. In short, Olive, whose chief idol was the decoration of her pretty person, was delighted with

the view she had obtained of the Marchioness and her lovely daughter, and rapturously exclaimed,—

“How charmingly delightful, father! I would not have missed the pleasure of this morning for the world!”

“Yes, I cannot say but I am well pleased,” cried the fisher, whose thoughts were alone fixed on Agatha.

“And were you really pleased with the cut of the pelisse, and the make of the sleeves, father?” rejoined Olive; “to be sure the bonnets and the feathers in them were very expensive; but then one need not have them of such a quality, and yet look vastly becoming: now I think that Miss Mury, the Milliner, might contrive to make Jessy and I——”

“What is the wench talking of!” cried the fisher, with impatient curiosity; “what has Miss Mury, the milliner to do with the Cottage on the Cliff?”

“Lord, father, I was not thinking of the Cottage, and the nasty frightful Cliff, I assure you!” answered Olive, scornfully.

“Then pray what was you thinking of, miss?” inquired the fisher; “you might have had worse thoughts in your head, for aught that I know.” To which the disappointed Olive replied,—

“Why, what could I be thinking of, but the beautiful dresses of the Marchioness and Lady Lavinia!—their sweet pretty bonnets, and their handsome scarfs, and their lovely watches and gold chains! I could not take my eyes off them all the while they were here, and so I thought of Miss Mury, the milliner, and I could set our heads together, that——”

The fisher heard no more;—up he bounced, and calling Olive a silly maikin for her pains, and bestowing an epithet on Miss Mury, the milliner, not of the politest kind, he made a precipitate retreat, to go in search of Agatha and Jessy, to inform them of the pleasing intelligence he had received. Jessy was busy with the maids, but Agatha was reading in her chamber, and the fisher approached her with a sun-beam in his countenance, which shed its influence over her’s: ever calm, ever beautiful, but not ever mirthful, she sweetly exclaimed,—

“You are welcome, my dear sir, you are always welcome;

what need then of apology, to one, whom the sight of you always makes happy, and would make merry also, if this morning I were not disposed to be a little grave, perhaps a little pensive; but you look so pleasant, so good humoured too, I will try to borrow some of your smiles, to make me forget retrospections so gloomy; but can I look at this sable habit, and be unmindful of the day on which I put it on?—can I feel that I am fatherless, without reflecting that I had once a father?—oh! no, no!”

“My dear, I don’t wish you to forget your father,” exclaimed the fisher; “Heaven forbid! yet I would also have you remember that though fatherless, you are not friendless, and never shall be while Peter Blust has an anchor afloat! now, in the first place, I am come with a budget of good news: I have got a tenant for the Cottage on the Cliff, and an excellent bargain I have made for you, a lady of quality, foreign, I suppose, for she is just come from foreign parts,—a friend of the Marchioness of Montault, who is a melancholy sort of person mayhap, and wishes to live at the Cottage for a considerable length of time. She pays a handsome price; so my dear Agatha Singleton will have some money in her pocket at last!”

“But Agatha Singleton will not touch one penny of it, for all that,” cried the grateful Agatha; “would it were ten times as much! I would give it all to my benefactor.”

“Shiver my top-sails, if ever I take one farthing from you!” exclaimed the fisher; “perish the mercenary thought, or the friendship that is obtained by rubbing one shilling against the other! tell me that again, Agatha Singleton, and I——Zounds! I should be sorry to say an angry word either, in my passion, that would hurt your dear, little, tender heart, but I shall be in a very great passion, if ever you tell me of this again—I shall, by——all the little fishes that swim in the sea!” added the fisher, and laughed heartily.

“I will not contend the point with you at present, my dear sir,” smilingly answered Agatha; “for I really don’t like to see you in a passion, you are then out of your element: So you have seen the Marchioness respecting the Cottage then, have you, Sir?”

"Seen her, why, the Marchioness is only just gone, my dear," answered the fisher, "she came in her carriage this morning to Herring Dale, along with her daughter, the Lady Lavinia; there was another lady too, but she did not get out, so, you know, when the Marchioness had squatted herself down in the great chair, which she did without being invited, then she began to open the business, and we settled it in a crack. The money is to be paid down to-morrow morning, and the agreement signed and sealed, to make fast the contract on both sides; after which the premises are to be entered upon, and the lady is to take possession of the cottage immediately. Now, my dear, it will be necessary for you to be present at this interview with the new tenant, who may possibly like to see you."

Agatha coloured deeply, she was unaccustomed to see company in her father's time, he had not permitted her to mix in society, and she needed none while he was present; but, she had never asked her father the reason why he wished her to live so secluded, he would not suffer interrogations, and knowing this, Agatha never assailed him with any. It was therefore with some embarrassment, that she exclaimed,—

"Is it absolutely necessary, my dear Sir, that I should be present at your meeting with the lady, I would much rather decline it, if it be possible that you can arrange the business without me,—if not, I must yield to the necessity."

Now there were more reasons than one, why the fisher was solicitous for Agatha to accompany him, and they were all too potent to be resisted. In the first place, he imagined, that no human being, whether male or female, could behold Agatha Singleton without feeling deeply interested in her misfortunes, and more especially a female of exalted rank, to whom fortune had so liberally dispensed her gifts, and education had polished with every sensitive feeling, elegance and refinement;—nature's eloquence, to this last, rarely, ever pleads in vain. But what shall we say of the former? why nothing, positively nothing, since it is well known, and clearly authenticated, that all of these have failed, totally failed, in moving the heart to a tender and commiserating sympathy toward the truly meritorious and the truly unfortunate.

A modest appeal, however humble, has rarely found its way to the hearts of the wealthy ; but the bold, bare-faced imposter, has opened their purse-strings, when to genius, to merit, to talent, to suffering virtue it has been scornfully denied.

And, oh ! ye immortal gods ! can this be true ?—satirist, 'tis a tale beyond credibility ! Ah, would to heaven that it were so, my gentle reader, how gladly would I drop my pen, and leave you to the proof.

But all this our fisher, who was neither a poet, nor a dependent, did not know, so he concluded, that all who were truly great, were truly greatly minded, and noble in soul, as they were exalted by birth, and rich in splendour.

Mistaken man, he had seen but little on the rough seas, and heard naught but the roaring winds ; he should have lived in the world, with worldly men, and with worldly women too, and he had known better.—But to return to our story, Agatha was most anxiously awaiting the fisher's reply, and the fisher was as anxiously contriving how he should make a plausible pretext, for her being obliged to go, and at last he hit upon the following,—

“ You must go, my dear,” uttered he, “ there is no doing without you, for there must be an inventory made of all the furniture, and every article you left in the cottage, when you came to Her-ring Dale. Now, you know, Sheltie was left in charge of them, and though I have no doubt of the poor fellow's honesty, yet that won't do ; I must see that every thing is quite right, before my lady takes possession of the premises, and I must have somebody to assist me, and that somebody must only be Agatha Singleton.”

Agatha could not, with any degree of propriety, offer now a dissenting voice, to this proposal.

Meanwhile Olive had ran to Jessy, the very moment that her father had quitted the room, with an account of the visit of the Marchioness, and her fair daughter ; and so much did Olive's head run upon the finery which was exhibited before her eyes, that she immediately began to give her sister a very accurate description of the dress of both the ladies,—the bonnets and the pelisses, but perfectly forgot to mention the business which had brought them there, and Jessy, in some surprise, exclaimed,—

"But, dear me, Olive, what could the Marchioness want with my father?"

"It was not my father that she wanted," answered Olive, "but the Cottage on the Cliff, for a lady of her acquaintance to live in; lord help her silly head, she will be glad enough to run away from it! when she has slept there a night or two, she will be so frightened with the screaming of the wild fowls, and the ghost that, folks certainly say, does walk there, whenever the wind blows easterly;—Miss Singleton may say what she likes, but her maid Claribelle tells me, she has often heard strange noises, in the chamber that the captain used to sleep in."

To which Jessy replied,—

"It was extremely silly and absurd then of Claribelle to say any such thing, and I hope, Olive, you will not encourage her again to repeat so idle a tale; who knows how such a report may tend to injure our Agatha? for, in this supposition, very few would choose to become a tenant of the cottage, which however, thank Heaven, is at last disposed of? how I rejoice, for the sake of our dear friend!"

"Dear me a fiddlestick's end!" cried Olive, disdainfully; "how many dears are you going to make of her, pray? she may be your dear, but she is none of mine."

"The more shame for you, Olive!" answered Jessy, reproachfully.

"I see no shame at all," replied Olive; unless it be in father for taking in another person's child, when he has got two daughters of his own, whom he ought to love so much the better; you may see with half an eye, Jessy, that he don't love either of us, half so much as he does Agatha Singleton."

"I cannot see any such thing," answered Jessy, much hurt at such an insinuation being thrown out against her dear father.

"Well, but somebody can, and somebody has told me of it several times," repeated Olive, with an intolerably provoking smile; pity that so lovely a lip should have engendered it, for it was the smile of envy; and the artful girl continued,—“And somebody said, (I protest, I cannot help laughing, it was so amazingly droll,) that if father was not an old man, that he would——” Olive stopped, and tittered again.

"Would what?" cried Jessy, highly nettled, though endeavouring to suppress her anger; would what, Olive? why do you make half speeches, which have neither good sense nor good nature to recommend them?"

"One must stop when one is going to laugh," uttered Olive; "well, somebody said, that if father was not so old—that—that—he—would marry Miss Singleton." Jessy reddened with resentment.

"And how base must that somebody be," uttered Jessy, "who could breathe such an aspersion against a father in the ear of his child!—against too, oh! an angel of purity! I blush for that somebody! and, oh, Olive! how I blush for my sister! for having listened to a wretch, who could inspire her with such sentiments of her father!"

"You had better mind, Miss Jessy, who you call wretches!" cried Olive, her eyes flashing with the fury of passion, so that she was almost breathless; "and as for your blushes, pray reserve them for yourself, if you please; you have more occasion to blush than I have, for you are over head and ears in love with——"

"Hold, Olive!" uttered Jessy, almost overpowered to tears, yet still restraining them, while an involuntary glow of crimson rested on her pure transparent cheek; "hold, cruel girl! spare this unnecessary, this tortured trial of my feelings, and know, that if I *have* loved, I love not *now*! let that content you; you have no rival in your sister, and be that hour far distant that you ever may; and remember, that however weak, however miserable the heart of poor Jessy, it can never beat but with affection for my sister."

Jessy's tears now flowed abundantly, and Olive, who had no apprehension that she would have taken what she had uttered, in so serious a light, and now convinced, though she had once suspected it before, that the object of Jessy's unhappy passion had been her cousin Crafterly, felt abashed and confounded by the ingenuous confession she had urged her to make; and having now no jealous fears to combat with, either with respect to Jessy or Miss Singleton, endeavoured by the most insidious art that was possible, to restore the fluttered Jessy to composure, before any one should surprise them in that situation, well knowing that from

her father she would encounter the most furious displeasure, and from Miss Singleton the most spirited reproof; for the fisher, since his conversation with Agatha on the subject of the deplorable change in his beloved child, had invariably adopted her advice; and, still more tender than ever over his drooping flower, never appeared either to notice that change, or inquire into the cause. Thus, by slow and imperceptible degrees, aided too by the powerful influence which Agatha held over her mind, and the fortunate absence of her faithless lover, (for Craftily was again out on the herring fishery,) the sweet Jessy was gradually recovering from the deep wound her heart had received, when the hand of Olive opened it afresh, but it lasted only for a few moments; Craftily was unworthy of a tear,—and when Olive condescended to stammer out a sort of apology for having said any thing to distress her feelings, when, with the softest smile she could assume—for it was assumed—she exclaimed,—

“ Well, who would have thought now, Jessy, that you would have been so foolish as to cry, only because I happened to say that Miss Singleton might be our mamma if she chose? my gracious! what a pretty little mamma we should have, only a bit too young! It was only a joke; and as to our cousin Craftily saying any such thing, you are quite mistaken, for he never says a word about papa’s darling; he don’t like her much, and that is the truth of it.”

“ And she don’t like him,” replied Jessy; “ so their affection for each other is mutual.”

“ Well, but you wont cry any more, Jess,” cried Olive, sportively playing with the beautiful tresses of Jessy’s light hair, that shaded, but did not conceal a forehead, white as the unspotted snow; “ you wont cry any more, Jess, will you?”

“ Am I crying now?” answered Jessy, in a tone of the most fascinating sweetness.

“ And you wont tell Miss Singleton a word of what has passed between us?” inquired Olive, anxiously. To which Jessy replied,—

“ You cannot imagine that I would do any such thing; I have too much respect for the feelings of the amiable Agatha, intentionally to give her pain; tell me only, who insinuated so false a con-

struction on the blameless conduct of our father, toward an orphan whom his goodness has protected, from the purest motives of benevolence, and I will never repeat the subject again."

Olive coloured deeply, and, as if some sudden thought had struck her, she exclaimed,—

"You are sure, then, that you will never mention it?"

"Never!—my word is given; did you ever find me break it to mortal, when it was once given?" replied Jessy.

"Why, no, you are pretty well for that," answered Olive, "so I will e'en tell you, and have done with it; it was Margaret Craftily; how you colour, Jess! and suppose she did say so out of a bit of fun, there was no great harm in it."

"Margaret Craftily!" repeated Jessy, in the utmost astonishment, and without ever removing her eyes from Olive's blushing face; "what! our friendly, honest, good-natured kinswoman, Margaret Craftily! indeed, Olive, you surprise me! I did not think that Margaret could be so funny, as you term it, on such serious subjects."

"Hush! I protest, here is Miss Singleton coming down stairs!" cried Olive; and she may probably join us. Now, silence, Jessy, if you love me!" This was accompanied by a kiss, cordially returned by Jessy, who in a low whisper exclaimed,—

"If I did not love you, Olive, I should not have promised secrecy, but *I have*, and that is sufficient."

At the conclusion of these words the light step of Agatha was perfectly distinguishable, and shortly, the door of the housekeeper's room was gently unclosed, and,—“May I come in?” sweetly pronounced, by a voice in which no one could be mistaken.

Agatha, previous to the arrival of the fisher to her chamber, had that very morning been unpacking some part of the wardrobe, and rummaging a few trunks, which had never been opened since the death of her beloved father, and in which there were several gifts which had been presented to her during her long abode at the convent of the Holy Sisters; some, however, she herself had purchased, out of the liberal allowance which Captain Singleton had yearly remitted to the abbess for her pocket-money, a part of which Agatha had never neglected to distribute among the poor

sisters ; 'for poverty is not shut out from a convent, any more than from a church ;—no matter ; Agatha freely dispensed her *petits morceaux* among the sisterhood, and received a shower of blessings on her beauteous head.

It is no wonder then, in return, they delighted to present her with little offerings of their respect and gratitude, for gratitude however scarce, is always an inherent quality in the heart of women. Would that it were equally so in that of men ! but, dear souls, if they have any at all, it is always to be seen shining through self-interest ; they are interested in something before they part with one atom of it : but the soft heart of woman will make any sacrifices, rather than seem to forfeit her just claim to it. And so did the nuns in the convent of the Holy Sisters, for, somehow or other, they continued to repay the young and beautiful novice for the kindness she had evinced toward them. Some wrought little baskets into various shapes and forms, while others netted purses of silk or beads ; some made flowers, which seemed nothing wanting but in fragrance ; and others presented Agatha with curious rings, and some gave her necklaces of beautiful workmanship ; in short, there were none that did not give what they deemed an offering of gratitude to their lovely sister Agatha, and when she quitted the convent, many a bosom heaved a sigh, and many an eye dropped a tear, well assured that on this side the grave they would behold her no more !—nor was Agatha less affected at parting with the friendly nuns, the sight of whose gifts had this morning awakened the most tender recollections,—pleasing, yet painful,—bitter, though sweet ; and it was these emotions which filled her heart when her protector entered her chamber, and she could not control them. After the departure of the fisher she recovered her cheerfulness, and turning over her trunks, selected from her own little store, that she had privately purchased when in Denmark, some beautiful presents for Jessy and Olive, and in which Margaret Craftly was not forgotten ; (for Agatha had always liked Margaret, though she despised her brother) and placing them all in a basket of beautiful workmanship together, she hung it on her arm, and tript lightly down stairs, in order to present her offerings of friendship and sisterly affection.

But neither Jessy nor Olive were in the oak parlour, and she went in search of them to the housekeeper's room, where it is well known that she found them.

In one moment she spread her little store on the table, and bade them take what they liked, save a rich crimson silk bag, which she intended as a gift for their honest kinswoman, Margaret Craftly.

A candle might have been lighted in the face of Olive, and she dared not look at Jessy, who, softly murmuring a gentle sigh, deplored the ingratitude of the censorious Margaret to so pure and spotless a being as Agatha Singleton, believing her to be totally unworthy of her generous gift.

But Jessy said nothing, neither did the too conscious, but now abashed, Olive, who, having her first choice, save the bag which was intended for Margaret, and of which, had it been possible, she would very willingly have deprived her, took care to select the most beautiful and costly of Agatha's presents; then turning to Jessy, she exclaimed,—

"There, Jessy, the rest are for you!" At this moment, a beautiful little cornelian heart, set in delicate pearls, and which had escaped the greedy eye of Olive, most invitingly appeared at the bottom of the basket, and Olive wanted that too; but Agatha gently laying her hand on hers, sportingly exclaimed,—

"No, Olive, you must not expect to monopolize all hearts, and wear them in your chains; let Jessy have one heart, and one heart, well preserved, and long retained, is worth a thousand that neither love nor constancy have charms sufficient to bind to our service; be this heart, then, your own, sweet Jessy!" and, taking a small gold chain from her own bosom, Agatha affixed it to the heart, and tied it around the neck of Jessy, amidst the envious sneers of the half-pleased, yet certainly the frowning looks, of her discontented sister.

Then take the leaf that's ever green,
Whose blossom is thine own;
For he who gave the gift unseen
Must live for thee alone."

CHAPTER XVI.

" — Witness, Heaven,
In all the cruel catalogue of pains
Humanity turns o'er, if there be one
So terrible to human tenderness,
As an unnatural child."

TRIFLING and inconstant minds will always attach themselves to objects of as trifling a nature, while those that merit the most serious attention pass neglected by. And this happened to be precisely the case with Miss Olive Blust, as she rapturously surveyed the shining ornaments which she had made choice of, in preference to the plain and simple ones, that were left, without any choice at all, for the acceptance of her sister Jessy; and though she would have had no sort of objection to the little cornelian heart, and the gold chain, to which it was now suspended, yet, on viewing her own glittering treasures, she felt that the advantage was considerably on her side, and that she had better make a virtue of necessity on the present occasion, than be suspected of envy or jealousy toward her sister. There was also a probability that the trunks of Miss Singleton not being all unpacked, that they might yet contain something more valuable, which might one day or other fall to the share of her and Jessy; for the jewels which still remained in Agatha's possession were unknown to any but the fisher, who had expressly desired Agatha that it might be kept a secret from his family; nor did even Jessy know that her amiable friend was possessed of so much treasure: nor that in such a heart as Jessy's it would have made any impression, save that of the most transporting joy, that Agatha was beyond the reach of pecuniary want; but a knowledge of this would neither have diminished or increased the sentiment of almost veneration, with which she regarded the character of the beautiful and amiable orphan.

But had Olive been in possession of this important secret, it is certain that every action of her life would have been guided by it, and that Miss Singleton would have been viewed in a far different

light to what she now was. So much for worldly wisdom, and worldly prudence!—adopted by older and wiser heads than Olive Blust's; we will, therefore, not censure her, for following but the example of her betters: all Agatha's pretty gifts, however, were presently laid before the fisher.

"And how do you like this, father?—and is not this pretty father?" were questions repeatedly put to him by Olive; and he answered, "yes" to all, till he chanced to spy the cornelian heart, which was just beginning to peep from the snowy bosom of Jessy; and he exclaimed, in delighted accents,—

"Shiver my top-sails, if that be not the prettiest bauble of them all! come here, Jess, and let thy old father give thee a hearty buss, and wish thee joy to wear it." The open arms which were extended toward Jessy, were not suffered to remain long unoccupied, for the heart of an affectionate child leaped to receive this proof of affection from a father, whom she adored; and Jessy flew into those arms, that never could deceive her,—the best, the most secure, and safest for lovely woman, save those alone of an affectionate husband! all other arms are the enemy of woman, however gilded and charmed with the insidious art of flattery, or soft deluding friendship;—for

"What is friendship but a name,—
A charm, that lulls to sleep;
A shade that follows wealth and fame,
But leaves the wretch to weep!"

And whether Jessy thought this or no, as the arms of her doting old father were encircled round her slender waist, we cannot determine; but certain it is that her spirits were revived, when she gently disengaged herself from his arms, on the entrance of Miss Singleton and her kinswoman, Margaret Craftly, who, uninvited, had come to pass the day at Herring Dale; and, at her approach, the fisher exclaimed, bestowing a look of the utmost complacency on the smiling Agatha,—

"Well, Meg, and you have brought an olive branch in your hand, I see, to reconcile me to your company, whether I like it or not, so sit down and make yourself comfortable, my old lass. Jess,

what have you got for dinner, my duckling? now kinswoman is come, we must needs have something in addition to our fare."

"If I had thought that any ceremony was necessary I should have sent you notice of my coming," cried Margaret, quietly disrobing herself of her large red mantle, and her close black bonnet, not however without the assistance of Miss Singleton, who, perceiving a sort of coldness in the manner of Jessy toward her favourite kinswoman, could not account for this seeming indifference, and, fearful that Margaret had perceived it, redoubled her attentions; but Olive never condescended to show her any;—she was too intent on her finery, and was carefully arranging them one by one, into a work-box, when Margaret had entered the room; not even the caresses which had been bestowed on Jessy by her father, had disturbed Olive in her pleasing occupation.

Olive thought not much of a kiss from the lips of her poor old father, and, therefore, was not very solicitous of obtaining one; it was other kisses that Olive coveted, and other lips that pressed Olive's than those of the fisher; and the too-highly pleased and gratified girl, and, it may be added, too fatally pleased with these, valued naught besides.

Meanwhile Margaret had not been insensible to the cold looks of her favourite Jessy, nor to a peculiar expression which was evidently displayed on the countenance of her kinsman at her approach. He was civil,—too civil by half; but the warm, affectionate, and cordial glow, with which he had always welcomed her at Herring Dale, was on this morning flown.

There was an air of chilling reserve, mixed even with his good-humoured pleasantry, which cut the generous Margaret to the soul, the more, as she was perfectly unconscious of having merited it; but that her brother might, was a thought uppermost in the mind of Margaret; no doubt the silly youth had been making love to one of his pretty kinswomen, perhaps to Jessy, whom she suspected that he really loved;—perhaps too Olive, whom she suspected that he only pretended to love, and had always blamed him for;—but admitting that it were so, and that her kinsman had discovered it, why should she be blamed? the conduct of her young brother was not in her keeping, neither were the hearts of his daughters;

if they acted imprudently, why should he feel any resentment toward her ?

Besides, Margaret had a small touch of family pride in her composition, as well as Peter : she did not see why her brother Leontine was not a fit match for either of the daughters of her kinsmen ; they were nothing more than the daughters of a fisher, and though he had acquired a considerable property by his successful voyages and trading on the coast, yet her brother was treading fast in his shoes, and had been equally a sharer of the good gifts of fortune ; her cousin Jessy too, when she gave her hand to Peter, was by no means destitute of the shining ore ; she had been the only child of a wealthy fisher, and Peter had not been a loser by intermarrying with her pretty cousin. Thus, armed at all points, Margaret was by no means disposed to receive in silence the cold looks of her kinsman, nor the changed manners of Jessy, who, though she showed no apparent displeasure, or conducted herself with rudeness, yet avoided that familiar tone of kindness in which she had always been accustomed to address her.

Meanwhile Agatha, who had with pain remarked the change toward the good-natured Margaret, both in the fisher and Jessy, endeavoured by every palliative in her power to sweeten the sour, and, presenting the little present she had preserved for her, begged that she would receive it as a small token of her respect.

" Indeed, I wish it were better, Miss Craftly," uttered Agatha, " but I well know that you will not regard the value of a gift so offered the less, because it springs from the heart." To which Margaret gravely replied,—

" No, my dear, not were it twenty times of more value from any one else ; and would to God that there were more hearts like your's ! how inestimable would be the gift, however small, if given by such as your's ! but alas ! my dear Miss Singleton, there is a plentiful lack of such hearts now-a-days ! the world's turned topsy-turvy, and, in my belief, there is no true honest hearted soul in existence !"

" Heaven forbid, my dear madam !" uttered Agatha, smiling ; " the world would be little worth living in, were that the case."

Margaret cast down her head in silence, but as she did so she

caught the eyes of the fisher examining her countenance with the minutest attention, and, as if unwilling to detect a fault there ; but Margaret, perfectly collected, looked at her watch, and observing that the hour was growing late, arose to depart.

"Why, heyday, kinswoman ! in what quarter blows the wind now ?" cried the fisher.

"You may e'en ask that yourself, Peter," dryly replied Margaret, "seeing that you are a much better judge of the wind than myself, though, if I may speak my mind, I will not let it blow so coldly on me again in this quarter for one while to come."

"How so, kinswoman ?" cried the fisher, attempting to recover the usual jocularly of his humour ; "what has been foul of thee, Meg, that makes thee so glumpy ?"

"You may just e'en ask that of yourself too," cried Margaret, "for I neither know nor care why I have been this day treated so slightly by you and all your family ; but you shall tell me the reason why, when I place another foot over your threshold, Peter Blust, you shall tell me then, kinsman, I promise you, and so good even to you all ; you will find my room better than my company."

And Margaret huddled her cloak about her without further ceremony, without one attempt being made by the fisher to stop her, and Agatha, feeling that she had no right to interfere in a point so delicate in the house of her protector, as to persuade her to relinquish her intention of immediately departing, sat an unwilling spectator of a scene which was extremely unpleasant to her feelings, during which Margaret had proceeded as far as the door without being intercepted in her progress ; she then turned to Agatha, and, in a voice which plainly bespoke the nature of her feelings, exclaimed,—

"God bless you, my dear girl,—God bless you ! you have done all you can to make me comfortable, but the wind blows contrary, you see, my dear, in spite of all your kindness, so I must bid you farewell."

Margaret was now trotting off, when the fisher started up, and, placing himself between his kinswoman and the door, protested that she should not go till he had made his peace with her.

"And why have you broken it, Peter," demanded Margaret, "tell me that?—why am I looked on so coldly by you and your daughter Jessy, tell me that? and your answer shall suffice me.—As to Olive, I will not charge her with present neglect, I am accustomed to bear with the waywardness of Olive's temper, but for Jessy's, it is wholly new to me, there must be a reason, and I would know it ere I depart, not willingly to trouble you again."

The fisher was hurt, for Margaret uttered these words decidedly, and without betraying the slightest inclination to remain, and Jessy looked a little embarrassed; as to Olive, glad of making a pretext of throwing all the reproach on her father and her sister, she turned to Jessy, and exclaimed,—

"It is all along of you, Miss Jessy, you are always doing something or other to make people uncomfortable, for my own part I never had a thought of vexing cousin Craftly, father and you must bear the blame, not me."

"And who is blaming you, you saucy minx?" cried the fisher; "zounds, and fury, who told you to put in your oar. Shiver my top-sails, if I hear you say another sentence on the subject I'll ——— Cousin Craftly, do you choose to sit down and hear reason, or not?"

"That is what I have been staying to hear, for these last ten minutes that I have been kept standing at the door," cried Margaret, now smiling, and very calmly resuming her seat next to Agatha; "now kinsman, I wait your pleasure, I only want to know in what manner I have offended you and Jessy?"

"Then you will wait till the first cock crows, for curse me if I can tell you," answered the fisher, "who the devil told you that you had?"

"My own ocular demonstration, kinsman," replied Margaret, gravely.

"Your own ocular fiddle-stick's end," cried the fisher, "and if it had not been for that prating hussy there I should have told you long ago to sit down and make yourself comfortable; but just to pacify you a bit, I will ask Jess one question,—Jess, has Margaret Craftly done any thing to offend you?"

Olive bit her lips and coloured up to the ears, not unobserved by Agatha or Margaret, while Jessy meekly replied, though with great hesitation,—

“Where no offence is given, surely, father, none ought to be taken. Margaret has declared she is unconscious of having given any, and Margaret is a lover of truth; I never once found her to deviate from it, therefore I believe her.”

Margaret’s eyes sparkled with triumph, and the fisher seemed struck with the manner of Jessy’s reply; and the effect of this speech on the feelings of the whole party, one alone excepted, very soon restored the most perfect harmony among the kins-folks.

Margaret pulled off her red cloak, and her large poke bonnet, and spite of all her former resolutions, quietly staid to supper.—The fisher was good-humoured, and Jessy attentive; some sly glances were exchanged between her and her sister, the meaning of which nobody knew better than themselves, and which nobody thought proper to inquire into.

Meanwhile Margaret enjoyed her kinsman’s excellent supper, and congratulated Agatha on having disposed of her cottage to so advantageous a tenant.

“For only think, my dear,” cried Margaret, “how charming it will be for you to receive your rent, from such hands, a lady of quality too,—they always pay quality prices,—you will always be sure of your money.”

“Avast there, cousin Meg,” cried the fisher, “some of the quality, as you call them, pay very bad;—don’t you remember a certain lord that came here to bathe for a whole season, and sent his groom to borrow oats for his horses, devil a half-penny he paid for them though, he took good care of that. Shiver my top-sails, if ever I trust a lord again, while I have got a horse left in the stable.—Then there was my Lady Cockletop,—but no matter, we have hit the nail on the right head now, I believe, for this Lady of quality, who is going to take the Cottage on the Cliff so nicely off our hands, is no less than a friend of the Marchioness’s, and if the lady don’t pay, why she must, that is all, there’s no danger there, the Marquis is as rich as a Jew.”

"And as generous as a prince, I have heard folks say," cried Margaret; "he gave a hundred pounds away to the poor fishers of Cromer the last time he was here."

"And Lord Montague is such a sweet young man too," exclaimed Olive, "I protest I think I see him now, making me a low bow, when he gave me the parasol, with his lilly white hands, on the night of the raffle. Cousin Margaret, Lord Montague's hands are as white as a cauliflower, it would do your heart good to see them."

"Tush, child," answered Margaret, "it would do no such thing—what has one's heart to do with a man's hands?"

Now whether it was the manner of Margaret's uttering this, or from some whim of the fisher's, we cannot tell, but he burst into so violent a fit of laughter as nearly disconcerted the gravity of his kinswoman, in which it was morally impossible not to join; and Agatha then talked of the visit she had to make the ensuing morning to the great lady.

"I wish one of you would go with me, it will be a charity," exclaimed she.

"Why, am not I going with you, my dear," cried the fisher, "shiver my top-sails, what have you got to be afraid of?"

"Oh, Sir, it is not fear," uttered Agatha, "but a female companion also will be much pleasanter."

"Especially an elder one," observed Margaret, longing to be of the party; but this the fisher thought proper to put a negative on, and, well knowing that Jessy would not, even if she were asked, he fixed on Olive as being the most proper to accompany Miss Singleton to the Cottage on the Cliff; of course Agatha could not start one reasonable objection to such a proposal, and she replied,—

"Thank you, Sir."

"Because," resumed the fisher, "there's Jessy would be quite dashed in the presence of such grand folks, but that bold-faced minx don't mind who she comes before, and will talk to them with as much ease and affability as if they were her equals; if you had seen her the other morning, at Adams's library, you would have thought she had been the mistress of the whole shop, for she plain-

ly told Adams that he made a market of every body who came into it, and that he should not make a market of her, for she would buy her thread and needles elsewhere, what think you of that, cousin Craftily?"

"Well, I positively cannot blame her for that," exclaimed Margaret, "for, to say the truth, that is the very worst fault of Adams; he will impose, even on thee here to feather his nest, and that is very ungrateful; for if any favour ought to be shown to his customers, it should be to those who butter his bread all the winter,—so I don't blame Olive in the least for telling him of it; some people require it, kinsman, when they happen to forget themselves." On these words Margaret departed from the house of the fisher in perfect amity with her pretty kinswomen, and cordially shaking hands with honest Peter, hoped that while Leontine was absent on his fishery, that he would be no stranger to the Red House, for so was the residence of Craftily called; before which Margaret had not neglected to include Miss Singleton in the invitation.

"I shall be quite offended if you don't shortly favour me with a visit, Miss Singleton," rejoined Margaret, as Agatha kindly assisted her in adjusting her red cloak and poke bonnet; "you are always so chatty and agreeable, that, as my brother says, it is a pleasure to sit in your company."

Margaret had popped this out quite unawares, and she coloured deeply on the vermillion also lighting up the cheeks of Olive, while Agatha, who felt that whatever Craftily had said of her was a matter of the greatest indifference, and that she wished it to be considered in that light by the whole party, gravely replied,—

"Your brother, madam, has been very little in my company to be able to form a conclusion on the merits or demerits of my conversation, to which he has frequently listened with the most perfect apathy, and I have often thought with displeasure, but that I must freely own has never given me a moment's uneasiness; because it is utterly and morally impossible that my sentiments and Mr. Craftily's can ever accord,—they are as decidedly opposite as light from darkness, and opposites rarely agree, you know; yet I thank you for your kind invitation, madam, and will certainly

avail myself of it, the very first opportunity, with the Miss Blusts."

Margaret now speedily made her exit from Herring Dale, not choosing to make any reply to a speech which Agatha had taken good care to render quite unanswerable, though perfectly intelligible, and which now appeared to strike the fisher in a very forcible manner, which, with many other secret observations he had lately made on the conduct which the lovely orphan had adopted toward his young kinsman, made it very natural to conclude that Leontine Craftily did not stand very high in her good graces; and that was very strange, for Leontine was an avowed favourite of every body else, and why not of Agatha Singleton? there was, doubtless, a reason why he was not so, but that reason the fisher was unable to guess.—Had his kinsman offended her? perhaps he had; and Agatha was a girl of too much discretion to prate about it:—he had observed too a coolness in Jessy lately in her manner toward Craftily, which had never been more perceptible than when he had last called to bid them farewell, on his going to the herring fishery. Jessy had coldly wished that his voyage might be successful, and that he might return once more in safety from the perilous ocean, but as she did so, she neither extended her hand, as usual toward her kinsman, nor were her eyes moistened with a tear of sensibility; for the fisher had beheld Jessy frequently in tears at the long and perilous voyages which Leontine had made; and sometimes even Olive had wept when she beheld her cousin depart, all which the fisher attributed to emotions produced by friendship only; but now, Jessy had exhibited a very different conduct, for she neither betrayed any outward sign of regret in the absence of her kinsman, or appeared conscious that he was departed on a hazardous and perilous undertaking, and well did the fisher know, that Jessy's heart was not insensible,—to what then was owing this most extraordinary change in her disposition toward Craftily?—to whom could he apply for information on so mysterious a subject?—not to Jessy herself, for he had faithfully pledged his word to Agatha Singleton, never to urge her on the cause of her depression.—But could Craftily be the cause of that depression in his adored child?—could Craftily be that designing insidious serpent, who had crept beneath his friendly, hospitable roof only to despoil him of his dearest treasure?—

Fire and furies ! had he been all this while cherishing a viper in his too confiding bosom, only to sting the heart of his innocent child. Perdition overtake him, if ever he should enter his doors again.

Up rose the fisher, with clenched hands, and fury darting from his eyes, to wreak his vengeance—where ?—Craftly was not there, he was gone to the herring fishery, from which he might never return, or return only a stiffened corpse. How useless, how absurd then, was this stormy gust of passion. Perhaps he was not guilty,—he had no proof that he was ;—Agatha Singleton had never breathed a sentence that could make him accuse his kinsman of such a crime ;—Jessy had never betrayed a sign that Craftly was an object of her affection, nor had Craftly shown Jessy any attention other than friendship warranted ;—if there was any to suspect it was Olive. How foolish then, and at the same moment how unkind, and how unjust, to harbour such a thought against the honour of his worthy kinsman ; and, fortunately for the absent Leontine, there was a full length portrait of him drawn when a boy of five years old, and which had been presented by his mother, on his birth-day, to Mrs. Blust, and which now hung directly over the fire-place, and, on this portrait the fisher strained his eyes till he could see no longer, for an almost involuntary gush of tears prevented him, and with which the fury of his violent passion abated,—nay, it was completely dissolved in the tender effusion.

There is a resistless pleader in the loveliness of infantine beauty, even to disarm the fiercest of human passions ; however inflamed by anger or tortured by anguish, we cannot behold it without being softened and subdued by its bewitching influence, and never was there a fitter time for its operation on the heart of the fisher.

The blue laughing eyes of the little innocent seemed to reproach him,—the hands, pure as alabaster, seemed too raised in supplication toward the inflexible judge who had condemned him,—and the countenance was angelic.

The fisher gazed intently on the smiling dimpled cheek, and the infant lips, that seemed to say, if not for me, for my mother's sake, oh ! spare me. Confoundéd, ashamed, half-convicted of his cruel

and unjust suspicion, the fisher, as he continued to gaze on the portrait of the lovely child, gradually dismissed from his mind his jealous fears of his favourite kinsman ;—thought of all the amiable qualifications that Leontine possessed, how faithfully he was attached to his service, and determined never more to let such a thought disturb his pillow or invade his peace ; besides he was ashamed of it, though it was a thought not revealed to mortal, the searcher of hearts knew that he had cherished it, and the fisher felt compunction and remorse, which are always followed by repentance ; he would not do so again, “ Shiver my top-sails, if ever I do,” uttered the fisher, and swallowing a glass of brandy, he murmured a blessing on the head of Craftly,—that he might return in safety to his native shore, that his voyage might be prosperous and happy ; and looking at the portrait, once more muttered to himself,—

“ God bless thee, boy, God bless thee !—would not hurt a hair of thy head to be made an admiral of a seventy-four—no, shiver my top-sails, if I would.”

And the fisher felt his conscience greatly relieved, and all the animosity which he had momentarily conceived against his kinsman had completely evaporated, with the ebullition of his passion.

The fisher had before this entertained some doubts of Craftly, and the sight of poor Margaret on this morning, rekindled a spark which was not yet wholly extinct in the breast of the fisher ;—hence arose that cool, yet civil, that doubtful, yet cheerful smile, with which he received her on her first entrance.

Perhaps Margaret was in the bosom secrets of her brother ; perhaps she knew of——knew of what ? the fisher could not tell ;—still for the soul of him he could not, just as this thought crept over his heart, bestow a cordial welcome on his kinswoman ; but when Margaret perceived it, he was again confounded and ashamed, as a proof of which, he instantly made atonement. He could not think poor Margaret to blame, and the speech of Jessy greatly contributing to ease him of his doubts of his honest kinswoman, she was speedily restored to his favour.

But how were the words of Agatha Singleton to be accounted for ;—she had expressly said that the sentiments of Craftly and

her's would never assimilate ;—what sentiments then had he uttered so unpleasing to her ?—Again poor Peter was puzzled and perplexed, and at the final departure of Margaret, called for a glass of brandy to dissipate the vapours from his mind.

" Confound suspicion !" exclaimed he, " 'tis a foul reptile, and should always be drowned in something, and I don't know but a glass of brandy is the best remedy after all."

" Ah ! no, Sir, say rather that generous confidence will dispel its force, if not entirely deface its impression," cried Agatha, " and heaven ever keep so foul a fiend from your mind, it should inhabit none but the guilty breast."

" True my dear," answered the fisher, evidently hurt by an observation so pointed, but which he felt that he had merited from so lovely a monitor, " you say right,—suspicion is a bad thing, especially when we suspect one whom we have cherished as our dearest and most attached friend. 'Tis a sad reflection that we cannot trust those whom we have so truly loved."

Agatha with pain beheld the conflicts which were now rising in the breast of her protector, but, feeling well assured that his allusions pointed not to her, remained quite silent.

But the lynx-eye of Olive had impatiently watched the doubtful looks which her father had sometimes cast at his kinswoman, and afterwards threw at her sister Jessy, and felt no small symptoms of curiosity to be informed from whence they arose, or whether Miss Singleton had any thing to do with it, and, taking advantage of the long pause which was made, she made use of the following exclamation :—

" Father what can you have to suspect in Margaret Craftly ?"

" Margaret Craftly, you pert Jezabel," cried the fisher, " who told you that I suspected Margaret Craftly, you abominable slanderous jade !—have I any right to suspect Margaret Craftly more than I have Leontine Craftly, hey ?—nay, of the two, I don't know but I might fix on him as the principal transgressor, were I inclined to be suspicious of any evil from that quarter.—Now, Miss Olive, what do you think of that ?"

With cheeks that would have mocked the deeply blushing carnation in its full bloom, and with eyes darting all their fiery beams

on the angelic, dove-like countenance of Agatha, Olive replied,—

“ You may go and ask those who have set you against Leontine Craftly, and Margaret too, I suppose, though they are so double-faced before them, and you may guess who that is, if you please, father ;—when people don't like people, they are always trying to pick a hole in people's jackets.”

“ Hold your tongue, you saucy hussy,” cried the fisher, whose anger was now beginning to wax apace, “ hold your tongue, you termagant, or, shiver my top-sails, I will soon let you see the difference there is between a fond foolish father and an angry one, you firebrand, I will ;—if your mother had been such a vixen I would have sent her packing before you was born. How dare you insult Miss Singleton, with whom you are no more to be compared, (though you are my own child,) than a herring skiff is to a man of war.—But zounds and fury ! don't provoke me again, or I'll—”

“ Pray, Olive, don't say another word to poor father, pray don't,” cried Jessy, who, pale and trembling, drew the arm of her sister within her own, and led her to a distance from her enraged father, whose lips absolutely quivered with passion ; “ dear Agatha, pardon Olive, she is a very passionate girl, but she don't mean half what she says,—pray, pray intercede with my father, to forgive my sister, she will never anger him again.”

“ No, shiver my top-sails, if I do,” cried the fisher, breaking a pipe which he held in his hand on the floor to atoms, “ till she has made a proper concession to Miss Singleton.”

“ Hear me, my dear Sir, I beseech you to hear me quietly, and then act as you please,” cried Agatha, “ I came not to your protecting, hospitable roof, to be a peace breaker, heaven and my own conscience acquit me of such a charge, and that to me is sufficient ;—I won't, I will not receive any concession from your daughter, she is sufficiently humbled by having offended you, to me there is no apology required, for Olive knows that she has erred in pronouncing me to be the defamer of Leontine Craftly, against whom I have never breathed a sentence that could in any degree tend to lessen your regard for him, much less have I ever prejudiced you against his truly worthy and amiable sister. Still,

Sir, I would have your daughter know, that I am above disguise, and now plainly tell her and you, that I do not admire Mr. Leontine Craftly; my reasons for which I am not obliged to explain; but though I do not admire him, far be it from me to prejudice him in the eyes of any other person, or to bear him any enmity,—why should I?—he has done me no wrong, and I would not willingly do him any. Now, Sir, let me persuade you to think no more of this little dissention, and to pardon the ill-judging passion of your daughter; for you too have displayed more passion than was necessary,—you were too violent, and—and we naughty women cannot bear it, can we Olive?—Come, unbend that brow, and smile on your father,—ah! where will you find a better friend than your father?”

Jessy pushed Olive gently before her, and Agatha taking her hand drew her close to the fisher's arm-chair.

“Go and kiss father, Olive,” cried Jessy, in a low and faltering voice.

“He will turn me away from him,” sobbed out Olive, for her passion had dissolved into a shower of tears, which the fisher no sooner perceived, than he stretched out his arms toward her, and Olive was strained to his heart for a few moments in silence, far, far more eloquent than words.

“Turn you away,” cried the fisher, “no, shiver my top-sails if ever I turn a repentant child away that clings to the bosom of a father;—but, where is that angel?—that peace making angel, that Agatha Singleton? Zounds, I must kiss her too.

“And, Jessy,” cried a soft plaintive voice, who was leaning over the back of his chair.

“What, my darling Jess,” uttered the fisher, “why so I will;” and Jessy, and Agatha too, received the proffered kiss.”

After which, the fisher recovered his vivacity, smoked an additional pipe, and drank too an additional glass of brandy and water, for which not even the soberest philosopher must blame him,—for philosophers are but men, and require their spirits to be enlivened as well as other folks.

As to Olive, her gratitude to Agatha was boundless, or appeared to be so, when on retiring for the night she followed her to her

little chamber, and poured forth an effusion of thanks too fulsome to mention : for well did Agatha know that it proceeded from a heart as light and inconstant as the breeze that blows over the ocean.

But our heroine had learned patiently to bear, and as patiently to forbear, and to feel and pardon the faults and weaknesses of others, in order that she might be enabled to correct her own ; for without we are sensible of our own follies, blindneses and weaknesses, I should be glad to know what right we have to set ourselves up as task masters, or reformers of the morals or principles of our fellow beings ?—Let us first hold the mirror in our own hands, and should it reflect a pure and spotless surface, show it to our friends ; for ocular demonstration admits of no argument, it ends all doubts, and is both theory, precept and example, exemplified in one bright and unfading character.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was a wild and breaker-beaten coast,
With cliffs above, and a broad sandy shore,
Guarded by rocks and shoals, as by an host,
With here and there a creek, whose aspect wore
A better welcome to the tempest-tost,
And rarely cess'd the haughty billows roar,
Save on the long dread summer days which make
The out-stretch'd ocean glitter like a lake."

OLIVE, delighted with the prospect of being the companion of Miss Singleton the ensuing morning to the Cottage on the Cliff, went to bed as light-hearted as she arose after passing the night in sweet and refreshing alumbers, which if broken, was only to turn round to her sister Jessy to ask what dress she should put on, and what ornaments would be most becoming to her complexion ; in short, Olive had as much forgot the altercation which had taken place on the preceding night with her father, as though it had

never been. Her mind, her disposition, was not formed for one serious reflection, than merely what occurred in the passing moments, but in the next it vanished from her recollection; but not so formed was the mind of Jessy, she dwelt with pain on the incident of the evening, and was inexpressibly grieved to find that the confidence her father had in Leontine Craftly was dreadfully shaken, and that he at length began to suspect that his friendship for his family, and the interest he apparently took in his concerns, were not so pure and honourable as he imagined; but that this unpleasing discovery was not owing to any representation given him by the amiable Agatha, Jessy felt well assured, and it was probable that the attentions of Leontine to her sister, which her father could no longer be blind to, were beheld with a sentiment of displeasure by him, as well as disgust, and that he would be now induced to pursue a very different line of conduct with respect to his future visits at Herring Dale; perhaps too, he suspected that Margaret had some share in her brother's views on Olive; and hence had arisen the coolness he had manifested in his manner toward her. She too, had shown some little resentment to her kinswoman, for which her heart felt some reproach, but it had only arisen from the unjust representations given her by Olive, and which she now knew were false, and that Leontine only had been the secret enemy of Agatha Singleton, and also of the severe animadversions which had been passed on the conduct of her beloved father, whose every action was the pure and untainted offspring of a generous heart. In short, Jessy had so many reasons for viewing the conduct of her kinsman in a criminal light, and for supposing that his intentions, on both her and her sister, were of the most licentious and dishonourable kind, that she trembled for the consequences and the punishment that would await him, when her father should more openly detect him and demand an investigation of his conduct, and prayed fervently that reformation might overtake him in his guilty and imprudent career of systematic vice. She trembled too, for her sister, whose all of earthly affections (if she had any) were in the possession of the insidious Craftly, and hoped that Olive would be spared from becoming the victim of his cruel and ungenerous artifices! Alas, poor Jessy was fully aware

too of the weakness of her own heart, she wished to spare Leontine, as well as her sister, from an exposition so degrading to the characters of both, and unkindly and ungenerously as they had acted toward her, she had no wish to retaliate, by seeing Craftily humbled by the sacrifice of her sister's peace or honour, and Jessie would have stretched out a helping hand to save them, had the means been left within her power, but they were not ;—Leontine had deceived her,—she could no more confide in him ; he had been treacherous to friendship as well as to love. And if she now interceded for him with her father, his vanity might again be induced to suggest that she still retained her former affections for him ; and what would Olive suppose ?—that she was only envious of the attentions which were paid to her by Leontine, and that in persuading her to relinquish him she only sighed to obtain those attentions exclusively for herself, and that so far from her counsel being received in a friendly light by Olive, that it would inspire her with the strongest jealousy toward her, and perhaps alienate her affections for ever.

Thus painfully and delicately imposed to silence, Jessie endured the most insupportable conflicts between affection and duty, and the few moments which had been given to sleep were restless, and disturbed by feverish dreams of the past, and fearful apprehensions for the future, from which she was frequently awakened by Olive's anxious inquiries of,—

"My gracious, Jessie, why don't you answer me?"

"Answer what, you tormenting girl?" cried Jessie, "it is very strange, Olive, that you will not suffer me to enjoy a moment's repose, but must awaken me out of my sleep, even to ask such silly, trifling questions."

"Awaken you out of your sleep, Jessie, that is a good one," answered Olive, laughing, "why your eyes have been wide open ever since it was day-light, and you have been tossing and tumbling about the whole of the night, I wonder for my part what can make you so restless."

"You would not wonder much if you knew all my thoughts," replied Jessie, struggling to suppress a deep sigh, "but I do not wish to pain any breast but my own, therefore I will bear them in silence, whatever trouble it may cost me."

Olive did not choose to make any comment upon this appeal to her own heart, from that of her affectionate sister, because it was very probable that she guessed at some of Jessy's thoughts, and had no inclination for a further information on a subject which it was equally probable she did not wish to investigate herself.

Meanwhile Jessy arose and dressed herself, and Olive wishing to divert her thoughts from that which she most dreaded, again repeated,—

"But do now tell me, Jess, what I shall wear to-day, to go to the Cottage on the Cliff.—How provoking that Miss Murry has not yet finished my green satin spencer! it would look so delightful with my Leghorn bonnet, with the green trimmings! it is exceedingly becoming;—don't you think so, Jessy? but you are so cross and peevish this morning, that you won't tell me whether you think so or not; you are grown very ill-natured, Jessy, lately, and that is the truth of it."

Tears almost filled the eyes of poor Jessy, as she glanced at her pallid countenance and wasted form, in the reflecting mirror that was before her, while she heard in silence the unkind observation of her sister, but forcing a smile through her tears, she calmly answered,—

"I am much changed within these few months, Olive, it is certain, in person, but no one will do me the injustice to say that I am changed in my temper toward my relatives and friends; to some, indeed, a change was necessary, but they were not my friends. I changed only to an enemy."

Another pause ensued, which Olive took great care not to interrupt by any observation of her own, and by this time it was the hour for Jessy to look after the household concerns, and to see that the preparations were going forward for the family's breakfast; and the sisters separated, much to the satisfaction of the one, and the deep regret of the other, that no hint,—that no warning would be taken, to shun a snare which was evidently working for the ruin of her peace,—nay, perhaps her honour, and would, probably, have been her own fate, but for the guardian angel who had interposed in her behalf; in short, the tender-hearted Jessy was now seriously alarmed for the danger of her sister, yet so fre-

quently repulsed in her efforts of serving her, was unwillingly obliged to relinquish her generous intentions, and leave her to her own discretion, of which, alas, Olive possessed but a very moderate share ; for vanity and self-love, the leading features of her mind, perverted even the few virtuous propensities that she inherited by nature, and left her no chance of being guided by the judgment of her friends, or her superiors ; to which might be added her violent passions, for none of Olive's feelings were of the gentle kind ; she was weak, but she was not gentle, and, both youthful and beautiful, she was the more likely to become the easy victim of man's insidious arts, and the weakness of her own disposition.

Though nearly a twelvemonth had elapsed since the loss of Captain Singleton, still his affectionate child had never thrown aside her mourning habiliments, which were of the deepest kind ; yet it was highly necessary on this morning to make some little change in her attire, not only out of respect to her protector, but to herself, as to a decent regard to external appearances ; being the daughter of a gentleman, by birth, education, and manners, she wished not to disgrace the memory of her sainted parents, by seeming what she really was not, destitute of apparel, but, dispensing on this morning with her newly worn out sable garments, Agatha selected from her wardrobe, a plain, but elegant, muslin robe, which was of the finest workmanship, and so constructed as simply and delicately to display one of the most lovely forms that nature ever gave to feminine beauty ; for Agatha, though small, was a model for the graces themselves.

With the lightness of a perfect sylph, her ariel figure yet disclosed to the admiring eye the most bewitching symmetry of grace and proportion, and each rounded and polished limb might have vied with the statue that enchants the world ; although a Venus in miniature, yet Agatha was a Venus, and when she made her appearance this morning in the little oak parlour, where the fisher had just taken his seat at the table, the unexpected change in her attire, and the uncommon beauty and delicacy of her person, occasioned him for a few moments to survey her with an air of the most conscious triumph and satisfaction, while he exclaimed in his usual accents of pleasantry and good humour,—

"Let them talk of the Marchioness and Lady Lavinia being the finest women in Cromer, now, if they please, but, shiver my top-sails, if they can show us such a face as Agatha Singleton's! not they, indeed, with all their paints, and their patches, and their furbelows!"

Olive, who could not reasonably deny the assertion, and who beheld the change in Agatha's attire with no small symptoms of envy, still thought that she must say something to so decided a preference being given by her father to the charms of Miss Singleton, when Jessy and she were present, and determined that something should be exactly opposite to her father's sentiments, so bluntly and heartily expressed, and she exclaimed,—

"Why, Father! how can you pretend to say any such thing? I am sure the Marchioness is noted for the fineness of her complexion, and Lady Lavinia too; they have charming colours, as fresh as any rose in the garden."

"I don't in the least doubt it, when it is fresh laid on," cried the fisher, laughing; "but it is no more like the rose, Olly, than thou beest like a cabbage-stalk. Shiver my top-sails! dost think, because I am old, wench, that I am blind too?"

"Well, I am sure that the Marchioness is a prodigious fine woman, not that I mean any disrespect to Miss Singleton," glancing at the beautiful robe which Agatha had on with additional envy; "only fine feathers make fine birds, as the saying is; and if I or Jessy could dress as fine as some folks, we might be thought as handsome as they."

"Why, shiver my top-sails! is the wench mad?" cried the fisher; "are not you dressed now, you hussy, more than you ought to be? what do you call that triinkum trankum thing you have got on now, and them furbelows you have got about your heels? curse me if I would not sooner see you in a stuff gown and check apron! look at Miss Singleton; you don't see her bedizened out in that fashion, do you?"

"No, father, but what Miss Singleton has got on cost twenty times as much as this dress of mine," answered Olive, still looking at the pretty robe with an envious sneer; "and if I had such a one——"

"You should not wear it, shiver my top-sails, if you should, you proud slut!" cried the fisher; "for let me tell you, Olive, once more, there is some difference between you and Miss Singleton."

Olive now pouted, and was compelled to silence, while Agatha, half provoked at such a quick return of her insolent allusion to her on her concerns, coloured deeply, and, perhaps, with some asperity, replied,—

"Yes, Sir, and bitterly do I now feel it: there was a time, when it was not thought necessary for me to be taxed with unkind remarks, or intrusive observations, or any change I thought proper to make in my apparel, and the one I have this morning made, is only out of respect to common decency; it is neither to add to pride, nor increase my vanity, much less was it meant to excite envy, rancour, or malice. I should still have been content to wear habiliments more suited to my feelings, and the humble situation of a destitute orphan; but my former dress is nearly worn out, and I have no means at present of supplying the want of it with a new one; that I now appear in, however costly or expensive, I prize only as the gift of a dear father, but it does not swell my pride, it only adds to the anguish I now deeply feel,—that it is the last gift he will ever bestow on his unfortunate Agatha.—Now, Sir, I am ready to attend you."

And it was well that she was so, and that Olive had flown up stairs, to get her bonnet and scarf on, the very instant that Agatha had ceased speaking; for the inclination that the fisher felt to reprimand Olive severely for her impertinence, was sufficiently apparent from the agitation and disorder of his countenance, and he only exclaimed,—

"Zounds and fury! if I have not a great mind to ——" but Olive was out of sight, and Jessy encircled in his arms, while both Agatha and she strongly pleaded for the absent culprit, who in a few moments appeared with an additional silk handkerchief, which she declared she had brought on purpose to wrap round her father's neck; an attention never observed by Olive before, and which, angry as the fisher was with his saucy girl, appeared to him a novelty, and of the pleasing kind; so this once Olive was

again restored to favour, and in a few moments they set out on their expedition to the Cottage on the Cliff, the sight of which almost overpowered the already fluttered spirits of our lovely heroine; but she knew how necessary was her fortitude at the present moment, and therefore endeavoured to exert it to the utmost of her ability.

When they ascended the steep ascent, which led to the entrance of the Cottage, it had a look of desolation, wild and rude; and though the garden had by the care of Shelly been preserved in a state of cultivation, yet some of the favourite plants and flowers, most admired by Agatha, had a withered and drooping appearance; they seemed as if they had mourned the absence of their lovely mistress, and Agatha felt it a reproach, that she had been under the necessity of abandoning the only spot in earth's created space that she could now claim as her own: it was her only home, though a deserted one, and she was now going by the same necessity to resign it to the hands of an entire stranger; but that stranger was a female of a reflecting and contemplative mind too, or she had not selected so solitary a retreat,—and Agatha hoped she would keep the Cottage in repair.

For perhaps, thought Agatha, I may one day again inhabit it. Alas, I may be compelled to fly to it as my only place of residence for my unsheltered head; for ah! should I lose my protector, who can tell how long I might find an asylum beneath his roof?—yes, from Jessy I should feel no abatement of kindness and hospitality, she would not turn me from her father's doors, for the virtues of that father are transmitted to the heart of his amiable child; but from the unfeeling, haughty Olive, what cruelty might I not expect,—what outrage of delicacy might I not suffer? Oh, be that hour far distant, kind-hearted, benevolent fisher, when Agatha is destined to see that head laid low in the dust. As these mournful reflections occupied the mind of Agatha, it is possible that her arm trembled as she leaned on that of her protector, who instantly perceiving her emotion, which he attributed to fond regrets of the happiness she once enjoyed with her departed father, and melancholy retrospections of his unfortunate fate, endeavoured to soothe and tranquillize her spirits as much as he possibly could, before they finally reached the cottage.

"Come, my dear, we are now just at the top of the cliff," cried the fisher, supporting her more on the left which overlooked the rocky and sandy beach, over which the waves now rolled with impetuous violence, "a few more paces and we shall hail our friend Sheltly, who will be on the look out for us."

"Why father, how you hurry Miss Singleton," cried Olive, "and I protest I am quite out of breath; you wont stop to let me look at any thing, I never saw the like of you."

"Shiver my top-sails, and what does the wench want to see," cried the fisher, now pushing Olive gently before them, "mayhap a poor seagull that is upon the look out for her prey, and cannot find it;—poor rogue, she is no worse than mankind,—we are all birds of prey, with not half the excuse to make up for our rapacity."

At this moment they arrived at the Cottage, at the door of which stood honest Sheltly, who made his respectful obedience to Agatha, but noticed Olive in no other way than by making room for her to pass him, nor did she deign to bestow a glance on her father's old and faithfully-attached vassal.

"I am happy to see you look so well, my dear young lady," cried Sheltly, observing the altered appearance of Agatha with extreme satisfaction, while he conducted them into an apartment, in which there was a large, comfortable fire, made for the reception of the expected company; and Agatha perceived that the greatest care had been paid to the household furniture, which was in excellent order, and, turning round to Sheltly, with the sweetest smile of affability, she thanked him for his attention toward her.

"Ah, dear miss, what should I be, if I had not taken care of every thing that belonged to you?" uttered Sheltly, with genuine and affectionate warmth; "for in the first place, it was my duty to my master here, and in the next place I felt it to be my duty as a man, to serve one whom every body must and ought to feel for; no, lady, there are no thanks due to me, for you owe it to Heaven, and to your own merits."

The fisher was much pleased with this speech of honest Sheltly to his dear adopted, and was determined that his attentions toward

her should not go unrewarded, and, drawing him aside, conversed with him in a low voice, not a syllable of which was heard by Agatha, or the curious and impatient Olive, who was not long seated before she whispered something in the ear of Agatha, to which, after a pause, she made the following reply :—

“ Dear Olive, cease to ask questions which would, indeed, puzzle me, were I to attempt to give you any elucidation, of a subject I have never once thought of, much less inquired into ;—you know I do not credit such absurd and ridiculous stories.”

“ Well, but Sheltly knows, and perhaps he can tell me,” cried Olive ; “ though I should be very much frightened to stay here, if I thought he had seen it.”

“ Seen what, Miss Olive ?” demanded Sheltly, in some surprise.

“ Why, the—the—the ghost,” answered Olive, drawing her chair still closer to that of Agatha ; “ the young lady who sits with a baby in her arms, always singing it to sleep ; and is so beautiful that she looks like an angel, I have heard Alice say.”

Sheltly now laughed heartily, for he could not resist his propensity to mirth at any time, however unseasonable it might be at the present moment, while he jocosely exclaimed,—

“ By St. Peter, then, Miss Olive, if there was any ghost, it must have whipped through the key-hole, baby and all, for I have kept the doors locked, and the windows bolted and barred ever since I have had the care of the Cottage, now a twelvemonth come next Michaelmas-day, and deuce a bit of singing I ever heard, but the seagulls on the rocks ; and what is still more, I have often slept in the very chamber that the——”

A look from the fisher now suddenly put a stop to the progress of Sheltly’s discourse ; for the fisher was well aware that it was in the captain’s chamber that Sheltly had usually slept, when he staid all night from his own residence, at the sign of the Trumpeter, and, apprehensive that he might recal some painful emotions in the mind of Agatha, he vociferated,—

“ And what does it matter where you slept ? I warrant me, you were a match for the best ghost in Christendom ! so there is an end of that business, friend Sheltly ; and as to you, Olly, let me hear no more of that confounded pack of idle gossips’ stories, I

beg of you. Come, throw some more logs of wood on the fire, for I don't doubt but in a few minutes the Marchioness and her friend will be here.

This order was immediately obeyed, the fire replenished, and all things prepared for the arrival of the illustrious visitors. At length the trampling of horses was heard, and a superb equipage appeared gradually ascending the steep hill.

The fisher started from his seat, Olive ran to the window, to see if she could descry the Marchioness and Lady Lavinia, but the now really trembling Agatha still kept her station; for she knew not why, but her heart beat tumultuously, and she felt a sensation nearly approaching to fainting, when Olive exclaimed,—

“Oh, Miss Singleton, I protest there is a young gentleman in the carriage with the Marchioness, and the lady, who is covered all over with a black veil,—and oh, my Heavens! it is no other than Lord Montague himself! I could swear to his beautiful auburn hair, and white forehead! gracious me, what a flutter I am in! how my heart beats!”

“Be assured that it does not beat more than mine,” uttered Agatha, in a low and tremulous voice; “I am so unaccustomed to the sight of strangers, that I shall feel both awkward and abashed in their presence.”

“But you will see Lord Montague, and then you wout mind trembling a bit,” cried Olive; “he is such a sweet young man!”

By this time Sheltie and the Fisher stood in attendance at the door, and in a few minutes the carriage drew up; and Lord Montague, for it certainly was him that Olive had so accurately described, handed her ladyship into the Cottage, followed by the veiled lady in mourning habiliments, not a vestige of whose features were distinguishable through the dark covering in which they were enveloped.

Little ceremony now passed, except that a slight introduction took place between the Marchioness and Agatha, who had respectfully curtsied on her ladyship's entrance, and who, after being seated, began to survey the features and the dress of the beautiful orphan, with more minuteness and curiosity than good breeding strictly warranted, from an entire stranger. But it was

singularly strange that Lord Montague glanced but once toward Agatha, and appeared studiously to avoid entering into conversation with her, while with Olive Blust he seemed perfectly familiar; and the silly girl, almost intoxicated with vanity at this marked preference shown her by so exalted a personage, and so fascinating an object, was led into the most erroneous and absurd supposition, that the only son and heir of the Marquis of Montault had absolutely fallen desperately in love with her pretty face; and felt the most conscious triumph that could be imagined, from having formed so ambitious and ridiculous a thought, over Agatha Singleton, who, transcendently lovely as she really was, did not seem to possess any attraction for lord Montague.

"La belle Italiano does not speak English," cried the Marchioness; "we will therefore, if you please, Miss Singleton, arrange the business we are now come about without her."

Agatha only bowed, and the Marchioness, whispering in the ear of the veiled lady, she answered something in a low voice, and her ladyship then exclaimed,—

"Certainly, *ma chere amie!* we will immediately inspect the premises. Miss Singleton, my friend, the *Duchesse*, is admirably delighted with what she has yet heard and seen of the Cottage; but she has an infirmity of sight, which prevents the possibility of distinguishing objects very clearly, and in consequence of this infirmity of which I speak, is obliged to appear veiled, as recommended by her physicians. The *Duchesse*, therefore, solely relies on my judgment with respect to the settlement of the negociation which is between us, that is, the rent of the Cottage, and so forth, after which she will become your tenant for two years; Mr. Blust, you will clearly understand this agreement;—my friend will take possession of the Cottage for two years, and, if compelled to leave it before the expiration of that time, she will most willingly pay the rent for that term as now contracted for to Miss Agatha Singleton, owner of this said Cottage."

"Fair and honourable, my lady," cried the fisher, "quite so, and that is just what it ought to be with all honest folks."

"Miss Singleton, are you perfectly satisfied with this arrangement?" cried the Marchioness, again surveying the countenance

of Agatha with the most scrupulous attention ; and the modest blush which now mantled in crimson hues on her lovely cheek, gave evident proofs that so particular an examination of her person was by no means flattering to her ; for there was some dignity, as well as humility in Agatha's reply to her ladyship, which was thus ;—

“ It is utterly impossible, my lady, to feel dissatisfied with any arrangement you are pleased to make, which is so decidedly in my favour, nor can I sufficiently express my gratitude toward your ladyship and your noble friend, for that mark of your liberality which demands an orphan's thanks.”

A deep sigh escaped from the bosom of the veiled lady, as Agatha addressed these words to the Marchioness, and she appeared agitated by a sort of tremour which possessed her whole frame ; and she had several times occasion to apply a bottle of volatile salts, apparently to support her spirits, which seemed under the influence of uncommon depression, but from what cause it was impossible to define ; the utmost attention was, however, paid to her by the Marchioness, and Lord Montague, who, more than once quitted the side of Olive, with whom he had entered into the most familiar conversation, and, with an air of the most respectful deference, requested to know if he should conduct her to the carriage.

“ Perhaps the room is too close for you, *ma belle amie*,” cried the Marchioness, approaching her on the opposite side to that on which Lord Montague had taken his station, endeavouring by every possible means in her power to conceal the agitation of her mysterious friend, for mysterious she certainly was, from exciting the particular observation of any one of the party ; but it was extraordinary that no answer was returned to the anxious inquiry of the Marchioness, or the slightest notice of the attentions of Lord Montague.

Meanwhile Agatha and the fisher both expressed the deepest concern at the indisposition of the lady, and entreated that she would not stay a moment longer to inconvenience herself on their account, as the final arrangements could be made at any other opportunity, or wait her ladyship's pleasure.



MISS SINGLETON I BELIEVE YOU WILL FIND THAT
SUM ADEQUATE TO THE AMOUNT.

"And I beg that you will take some refreshment before you go, my lady," cried the fisher; mayhap a glass of wine, and a bit of cake, will revive your spirits."

"You are excessively obliging, Mr. Blust," replied the Marchioness, "but I will answer for the *Duchesse*, that she will decline your friendly offer, only because she is an invalid, and under the necessity of abiding by the rules of her medical attendants; we will, therefore, now settle the business at once, to spare you and Miss Singleton any unnecessary trouble of coming to the Cottage again on our account. Six months advance of the rent I think you said, Mr. Blust, was the usual demand?"

"Exactly so, my lady," cried the fisher, "but mayhap this may not be agreeable to the lady; it don't matter, when the rent is in such hands, when it is paid,—it don't matter a single farthing."

"Oh, but it is perfectly agreeable, and much more to the satisfaction of all," replied the Marchioness, instantly producing from her pocket-book notes to the exact amount, which, presenting to Agatha, she exclaimed,—

"There, Miss Singleton, I believe you will find that sum adequate to the amount; will you have the goodness to sign your name as a receipt for that sum? I will also sign mine, Mr. Blust his, and there is an end of the business. Montague, I believe you have the necessary paper in your pocket."

Lord Montague instantly produced a paper, officially drawn up for the agreement, which the fisher carefully examined, then laying it on the table, said that nothing could be more fair and honourable, and, turning to Agatha,—

"Come my love," cried he, "you are the principal, I only the second; you must sign your name first; and, ringing the bell, desired Shelly to bring a pen and ink. "What is the matter, my dear girl? you are all of a flutter."

"I am, indeed, strangely agitated," uttered Agatha, who had glanced her eyes on the paper which lay on the table, and appeared motionless with surprise at the signature which there met her eye, in characters she too fatally remembered:—it was the name of Ellen La Roche!

"And what is it that agitates you thus, Miss Singleton?" in-

quired the Marchioness, somewhat sarcastically, for at this moment the attention of Lord Montague was instinctively drawn toward the beautiful speaker; for Agatha never appeared so transcendantly lovely;—her cheek was suffused with blushes of the most animated enthusiasm; her snowy bosom, far more snowy than the modest vestment which as modestly concealed it, heaved as though it would have burst its spotless confines, and her eyes were humid with the most unaffected tears of sensibility.

“But it were vain to expect an ingenuous reply to that question,” observed the Marchioness, darting a look of disapprobation on her son, when she perceived in what direction his eyes had strayed; “for the agitation of young ladies is so common, they are agitated by every thing, as if it were to draw the sympathy of every surrounding object towards them. Come Miss Singleton, will you be pleased to sign the paper?”

“The very instant that I have an opportunity of obeying your ladyship’s commands,” cried Agatha, with a dignity which always appeared natural to her, “but at present there is no pen and ink.”

“True,” cried the Marchioness, with a less pointed manner and tone of voice; “I wish that your domestic would make more speed fisher, for positively time is on the wing,” looking at her gold watch with a strong marked impatience; “the Marquis will certainly think that Montague and I have run away with *ma belle amie*; what a prodigious time we have been here!”

“Not more than an hour and ten minutes at the very exceeding utmost, mother,” cried Lord Montague, who had again resumed his seat beside of Olive, but seemed abstracted and confused; and when the talkative and chattering girl assailed him with her trifling and silly questions, he evidently grew weary of her conversation. In fact he listened to the pretty Olive, but forgot to inquire what she was talking about; for more serious contemplations at this moment filled the mind of Lord Montague, but what were those contemplations? why, gentle reader, you may guess, for I certainly do not mean to tell you till some more seasonable opportunity. At length Shelly executed his mission.—The pen and ink were laid in due form on the table, and Agatha reached out her little snowy hand, to affix her name to the paper, and again the

signature met her eye; and she involuntarily breathed forth a gentle sigh, while her hand trembled, at the same instant that she made every effort to recover sufficient composure, to return her most grateful acknowledgments to the Marchioness for having recommended her to such a tenant, and hoped that the Cottage, when inhabited, would in every degree merit the approbation of her noble friend.

"Oh, doubtless she will like it exceedingly well, Miss Singleton," cried the Marchioness, who now rose to depart; and Lord Montague, as he conducted the ladies to the carriage, which had now drawn up to the door, whether by accident or whether by design, we cannot tell, dropped a sprig of beautiful myrtle, so directly in the way of Agatha, that she could neither avoid seeing it, nor resist the inclination she felt of stooping to pick it up, and luckily it had escaped the observation both of Olive and the fisher; and it was well that it did so, for what was the astonishment of our heroine again to perceive a small slip of paper folded round the stalk, on which was written in characters nearly resembling those wrapped about the myrtle-tree, which had been stationed under her chamber-window some days before,—words to the following effect.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Afflictions past can no existence find,
But in the wild ideas of the mind;
And why should we for those misfortunes mourn
Which have been suffer'd, and can ne'er return?
Those that have weather'd a tempestuous night,
And find a calm approaching with the light,
Will not, unless their reason they disown,
Still make those dangers present that are gone."

And which made Agatha no longer doubt who had been the donor of the mysterious gift:—

Proud maid! that dost in scorn refuse
Friendship's proffer'd gift! ah! why lose

The prize !—'twas not slightly given ;
Inspir'd by the breath of Heaven,
It would have prov'd to thee a friend,
Unchanging ever to the end.
Weep o'er the fallen leaves too late,
To snatch them from their destin'd fate :
Ere long, perhaps, it may be mine,
But never, maiden, be it thine !"

The astonishment of Agatha after having perused the preceding lines, may better be imagined than described ; it was Lord Montague, then, who had written them ;—it was Lord Montague who had stationed the myrtle-tree, in full blossom, beneath the window of her chamber, and which she certainly had neglected ; not thinking that it was either consistent with prudence or delicacy to notice such a circumstance, or to prize a gift, the donor of which was utterly unknown to her, and evinced an air of mystery about it which she was by no means inclined to encourage, and to whom should she have imparted it but to her protector ? beneath whose fostering roof she wished to adopt no species of art or concealment : had her father been living, he would not have approved of any clandestine proceeding, neither was it likely that she would withhold any secret correspondence from the knowledge of the fisher, who in all respects had supplied to her the kindness of the parent she had lost ; and if Lord Montague was really her friend, he had taken a very singular method of implanting himself in her good graces, by mystery and concealment, which is not the most delicate and honourable way of approaching or advancing to the affections of a delicate and virtuous female, and Agatha rejected all such overtures so offered, as being the very height of madness and of folly ; besides, where had Lord Montague seen her ? or where had she seen Lord Montague ?—she did not recollect that she had ever set eyes on him before, she was sure that she had not, or it was probable that he would have made some impression on her memory.

Agatha while making this reflection, however, felt her cheeks glow with a suffusion of deep blushes, for which, at this moment, she was totally unable to account, because she felt assured that

those who had once seen the son of the Marquis of Montault could not easily forget him, and that he was far more likely to leave a favourable impression behind him, than to be an object of total indifference to the beholder. For of all created objects under heaven, he was the most fascinating in manly graces and personal beauty.

He was just entering into his twenty-third year ;—with a figure at once elegant and dignified, without an atom of being conscious that he was the splendid heir of a magnificent and princely estate, or that his exalted rank gave him the slightest advantage over his inferiors ; every feature, beautifully formed, breathed an innate purity of heart and benevolence of disposition, and his large blue eyes, sparkled with intelligence and sensibility ; he had light auburn hair, which shaded a brow so open and so ingenuous and frank, that without knowing the excellence of his warm heart, a stranger at the first glance might have placed the utmost confidence in his honour, and the sensibility of his heart, while his manners were correspondent with the same ; he always pleased, and studiously avoided giving offence to any one ; adored by his father's vassals, distinguished by his father's friends and respected even by his father's enemies. The name of Lord Montague resounded every where. The Marquis was too consciously proud of possessing such a son, and of his mother he was perfectly the idol ; yet he was not spoiled by this fond indulgence of both his parents, and often strove by every means in his power to render his young and lovely sister Lady Lavinia, who was his junior by five years, as great a favourite as himself ; but all the good natured efforts of Montague could not succeed, for Lady Lavinia was the counterpart of the Marchioness herself,—proud, haughty, and indignant ; and though lovely in person, was the very reverse in her disposition, manners, and mind. Born in an exalted station, and to inherit a splendid fortune, she disdained all that were not her equals, and looked upon them with contempt,—had no idea of talents alone having any claim of themselves to merit or reward, if they approached her in the garb of poverty, or solicited her bounty ; and not being really sensible of distinguishing objects worthy of relief or patronage, treated all alike, with indifference or contempt, and so likewise did the Marchioness, her mother ; although she was more

bitter in her taunts and irony against those objects whom she considered beneath her, and was not so flippant and girlish in her observations, yet she was, when young, the counterpart of her daughter, whom in person she greatly resembled.

Lady Lavinia was tall and masculine in her figure, and though she possessed fine formed features, they were very far from being expressive of female loveliness; or in other words she was a handsome woman, but wanted the softness of her brother's style of countenance to make her strike as being a lovely one.

And the Marchioness was just such another, with, of course, a much greater disparity of years, consequently the advantage was certainly on Lady Lavinia's side.

The head of this exalted family, the Marquis of Montault himself had been in person the image of his son, and possessed much of the softness of his character and disposition, but a disappointment in the first attachment of his heart in very early life, had, it was said, greatly changed his natural habitudes and character, and thrown a gloom over features which nature first modelled in her finest mould; for under the influence of this severe disappointment he married the Marchioness, rather to comply with the wishes of his father, than from any apparent partiality to the object which had been selected for him; in short, there never was a union in which little Cupid had so immaterial a concern; but this did not affect the sensibility of the lovely bride in the slightest degree whatever, for her heart was perfect apathy to all the tender approaches of the blind deity; for, in the first place, she was a Marchioness, with all appliances and means to boot to support her in the rank and style of one, and in the next place she liked her Lord tolerably well, for he was prodigiously handsome, and prodigiously good-natured, provided she did not enlarge too much upon the privileges which were so indulgently granted to her. She might go out as often as she pleased, but she must return home at a proper hour; she might invite as many gay parties as she liked to her splendid and magnificent mansion, on one condition, that the Marquis knew of what personages the gay parties were composed; and being fully satisfied on this point, the Marchioness was left to enjoy those pursuits and pleasures, which seemed

to constitute her chief happiness, with scarcely ever being interrupted by the presence of her husband, who confined himself solely to his, which were pleasures and pursuits of a far more rational and to him, more pleasing kind

For he delighted to view the scenes of life at a more humble distance; he entered the abodes of the happy and contented peasantry, nor disdained to visit those also of human misery, whose wants he cheerfully relieved with acts of the most exalted benevolence: he rewarded merit wherever he found it, and befriended genius though clothed in rags, in short he was the complete philanthropist; yet it was in deeds of the most private charity that he chose to render himself so, neither known to or inquired into by his fashionable wife: yet they lived on the most peaceable terms with each other, and were never known to quarrel, not even on the subject of expenses, because it so happened, that the Marchioness was penurious to a fault; she loved to shine, but wished to borrow a light from others, rather than use the means to extinguish her own, and as the Marquis was liberal, she felt that she had little reason to complain.

The birth of a son and heir, however, changed the cold and listless manner of the Marquis toward his lady, to whom he grew more attached, as Montague ripened into manly grace and beauty, and, if he did not positively love the mother of his son, he perfectly adored him the more, as the beautiful boy gave so fair a promise of inheriting the most virtuous qualities of disposition, and, in contemplating his young son, the Marquis insensibly grew more relaxed of his secluded habits, and less gloomy in his disposition; he now mixed with society for the sake of his beloved son; he had some spur,—some incentive to cause him to action, and forming the mind of Montague became his principal delight and study; when, however, the Lady Lavinia was born, the Marchioness had something to form after *her* fashion, and positively insisted on the privileges that were due to a mother,—that of superintending the education of her daughter herself, a proposition which the Marquis could not reasonably deny: and the young Lavinia soon became the very model of *that mother* in her habit and disposition, of which she was the very counterpart in form and features.

The Marquis beheld the glaring imperfections of his daughter with unavailing regret; unavailing, because he was well aware that no interference on his part would tend to lessen them, he, therefore, silently acquiesced in all the plans that were adopted by the Marchioness for her system of education, exerting his authority only when they seemed ridiculous or absurd; nor was Lady Lavinia very much attached either to her father or brother, for they were both too grave and too studious for her; besides, she often felt the partiality of the Marquis to Montague, and the preference given to him on every occasion, with a sentiment of something like ill-nature and envy toward him, not exhibited indeed in any external signs, but secretly suffered it to creep into her bosom, like a reptile, only to destroy the bloom of every generous,—every open,—every ingenuous impression.

Meanwhile Montague employed every means in his power to gratify and please the whims of his young and fantastic sister; if ever she frowned, he gave her additional smiles, and if ever she reproached him with neglecting to procure for her any trifling ornament that she wanted, he took care to provide her with one of more intrinsic value at another opportunity. Such was Lord Montague, and such was Lady Lavinia!

And Agatha had only just time to smuggle the myrtle into her bosom, before the fisher and Olive, who had officiously planted herself at the door of the Cottage to see the illustrious visitors depart, returned.

"My gracious, Miss Singleton!" exclaimed Olive, "had you no curiosity to see the beautiful carriage, which belongs to the outlandish lady, drive away from the door? and then Lord Montague, what a charming bow he made to father and I, as he bade us good morning! what a shape,—what an air,—and what a beautiful diamond pin he had in his bosom!—how it glittered and spangled! didn't it, father?"

"Shiver my top-sails, if thee beest not the silliest toad that ever lived, Olly!" cried the fisher, perceiving that an unusual pensive expression had stole over the beautiful countenance of Agatha, in spite of her utmost efforts to conceal it; and turning on her a look of impatient inquiry, he added, in his accustomed

tone of kindness ; " well, my dear, and how dost thee find thyself, after the visit of these great folks ?—The outlandish lady, as Olly calls her, be a devilish queer one, though, after all !—Shiver my top-sails, but she's a bouncer !—a seventy-four gun ship under full sail."

" But not with flying colours, Sir," cried Agatha, and smiled.

" Colours !" replied the fisher, " curse me if she would let us see what colour she was made of,—whether black, brown, or fair ! if ever I saw the like of her in all my born days !"

" There is certainly something very mysterious in her appearance," answered Agatha, " and, notwithstanding she is so robust and large in stature, evidently appears to be under the influence of great indisposition."

" But it was very comical that she did not speak all the while she was sitting here," cried Olive ; " nor yet let us see one glimpse of her face, which I dare say is no great matters, for I saw her foot and part of her leg, as Lord Montague helped her into the carriage, and, my gracious !—what a size ! she has a leg almost as large as father's, though not quite so clumsy !"

It was morally impossible to resist laughing at Olive's blunt and curious observation, and the fisher indulged himself heartily with involuntary peals, at the outlandish lady's expense ; at length, growing more serious, he suddenly inquired of Agatha why she appeared so agitated when she signed her name to the paper.

" Do you know, my dear," uttered he, " that I quite felt for you ? and could not tell what the dickens there was in it to frighten you so ; for first you turned white, and then you turned red, and then you shivered, and my lord, he looked at you, and my lady, she looked at you, and I stood gaping at you like a stuck pig !"

" I will tell you, my dear Sir," answered Agatha, " after which you will not wonder at my feeling a little suddenly surprised by an incident so strange, and which, I own, is somewhat mysterious to me even at the present moment :—there was the name of Ellen La Roche, which I imagine to be the real name which belongs to this foreign lady."

" Certainly there was, my dear," cried the fisher, it was her signature ; " and though the Marchioness calls her a duchess, or

a belle amie, curse me, if I think she is a duchess, or a belle amie any more than I am. Well, my dear, you saw this name of Ellen, what-d'ye-call-it, on the paper."

"Yes, Sir," answered Agatha, "Ellen La Roche, and I can scarcely forget it, when I inform you by what means I first became acquainted with the sound and the virtues of this extraordinary name, so familiar to my ears during my long abode in the convent of the Holy Sisters; since there is not only a chapel dedicated to the name of Ellen La Roche in this holy sanctuary, but an image of her placed there, to commemorate her spotless memory, which is, indeed, beautiful beyond description; and a grand mass is performed on particular days, for the repose of the martyred Ellen La Roche, who has been deceased for nearly half a century."

"Shiver my top-sails!—and not quiet yet!" cried the fisher, and smiled incredulously, while Agatha resumed the thread of her story.

"To account for the superstition of other countries, Sir," added she, "we must look back to the history of former times, before we condemn them: I can only say, that the name of this Ellen La Roche was so beloved, and so universally held sacred by the holy sisterhood, that I could not resist my impatient curiosity to be informed of her history, and why a chapel should be dedicated to her memory; and the Abbess related it to me in the following manner:—

"She was the daughter of a Danish corsair, who had acquired an immensity of riches by his dangerous and nefarious profession; a sordid, mercenary, and cruel monster; who, for the sake of his blood-thirsty avarice, would have sacrificed the peace and honour of his only child, and trampled on all laws, both human and divine.

"The uncommon beauty of Ellen La Roche had captivated many a Danish youth, but to one only was her heart inclined,—to him she pledged her virgin faith: he was wealthy, and the corsair promised that Ellen should be Atalba's bride. But, scarce was the day appointed for their espousals, when suddenly the corsair changed his mind.

"In vain did the unfortunate lovers plead to know the cause, he was stern, obdurate, and inflexible; and placed Ellen within

the walls of this convent, in order that she might behold Atalba no more. In a few days the reasons of the cruel father became obvious, for he had sold his child to a wealthy jew, miserably old and decrepid.

“ ‘Ellen was dragged forth from the walls of the cloister, and arrayed in rich and bridal ornaments, for the nuptial ceremony: she murmured not, and her bosom scarcely heaved a sigh, when the corsair pointed to the old decrepid jew as the husband of his choice.

“ ‘Pale was the cheek of Ellen la Roche,—but her eye was uplifted to Heaven, and she moved with steady pace towards the altar: already was the priest waiting to join their hands;—the decrepid jew extended his to clasp that of his lovely bride.

“ ‘Begin,’ uttered the corsair.

“ ‘ ‘Tis finished!’ emphatically pronounced Ellen; ‘I am the bride of heaven!’ and heroically taking a dagger from beneath her snowy vest, plunged it instantly to her heart, sighed gently, and expired in the arms of the corsair.

“ ‘The miserable wretch repented then, too late, of his cruelty to his martyred child: he lived indeed, but it was only to curse the day by which he was tempted by the demon of insatiate avarice to sacrifice his virtuous child, whose lovely remains he solicited to have interred in the walls of this convent, to which, as atonement for the crime he had committed, he bequeathed the whole of his immense riches at his demise; and in memory of the beauteous martyred Ellen, the holy sisters erected the magnificent chapel which you now see, and the statue of Ellen, which is placed on the centre of the aisle of the cloisters, marks the spot, beneath which her now mouldering ashes are deposited; twice in the week a grand mass is performed there, and, during the solemn ceremony, many a heart heaves with a sigh, and many an eye glistens with a tear, over the untimely fate of Ellen La Roche!’”

“ ‘And what became of the unfortunate youth, who was destined to bewail the loss of her whom he so passionately adored!’ demanded I.

“ ‘It is extraordinary,’ uttered the Abbess, ‘that Atalba was never afterwards seen or heard of, since the fatal day that

terminated the existence of his adored Ellen La Roche, and strange conjectures were surmised with his so sudden disappearance from Denmark, and strong suspicion fell on the corsair: but being urged to confession on his death-bed, he most solemnly declared, in his last will and testament, that he knew not aught of the flight of Atalba, nor ever had beheld him since he had been separated from his beauteous child. It was imagined, that the frantic and despairing youth had plunged himself into the bosom of the lake, and had never rose again.'

"In these words, my dear Sir, the abbess concluded the history of Ellen La Roche," continued Agatha; "imagine, then, my surprise and astonishment, when this name met my eye in the signature signed on the paper, as being that of the foreign lady. Names are certainly not confined to any particular objects, but I own that it is an incident which strikes me as being something singular. This lady being of such exalted rank, can never be a descendant of the family of the corsair; and the distance of time too, is so great, that it is scarcely probable to form an idea so wild and erroneous, as to suppose that she should have any connection with a personage of so nefarious a character as La Roche, and it was well known in Denmark that at the time he lived, he had but one child, and that was the martyred Ellen, whom we are pretty certain is no longer an inhabitant in earth's abode; how often have I lingered in the chapel, after mass has been over, to contemplate her lovely statue, and lament her untimely fate!"

"My gracious, Miss Singleton!" exclaimed Olive, who had listened very attentively to the recital of the story so sweetly and so expressively told by Agatha; "and was you never afraid of seeing the ghost of poor Ellen? I have no doubt of her haunting the chapel every evening after dark, with the dagger in her hand that she killed herself with: I declare, the very thought of it makes me tremble!"

"Makes you a fiddlestick's-end, you silly wench, you!" cried the fisher, who certainly seemed struck with this affecting account of Ellen La Roche, while he bestowed a hearty execration on the barbarity of the cruel corsair; acknowledging that he did not wonder at the emotion which Agatha had so involuntarily betrayed

at the signature of a name, which had so affecting a circumstance to recal it to her memory, and which I no more believe to be the name of that young woman, than it is mine," added the fisher.

"Why then, Sir, did she give it as her signature?" inquired Agatha.

"Oh, curse me, my dear, if I can tell!" replied the fisher, "there is always something in great folks that one can never get to the bottom of, try which way you will; but as for Ellen La Roche being her real name, shiver my top-sails, if I believe a word of it, so there is an end of the business; but what does it matter? you have got a good tenant for the Cottage, who will pay you an excellent rent for the term of two years, on the strength of which we will go home and drink her health in a bumper."

Agatha declared she was perfectly satisfied with the arrangements which had been made respecting the Cottage, and that she was ready to accompany him to Herring Dale whenever he pleased.

It was now agreed that Shelly should remain in the Cottage till the lady sent some of her domestics to take possession of the premises, as proposed by the Marchioness when they went away, and to whom the keys would be immediately delivered.

Olive was exceedingly anxious to call on her friend Miss Mury, the milliner, to arrange materials for the new bonnet, after the manner of Lady Lavinia's; but there was no time; and she was, therefore, obliged to postpone this important affair till a more convenient opportunity. On her way home she was particularly solicitous, however, to know what were the sentiments of Agatha, of the person and conversation of Lord Montague Montault, and of the Marchioness herself.

"She is certainly a fine woman," cried Agatha, "but I do not think her ladyship remarkably handsome, or yet remarkably pleasing; her manner is often repellent and unnecessarily sarcastic, from being too conscious of her exalted station, she imagines all who are not so, considerably beneath her; but her ladyship forgets, while she does so, that she loses the respect which is due to exalted rank, for that never shines with such lustre as when it condescends to bestow its smiles upon its inferiors."

"Well, but what do you think of Lord Montague?" cried Olive, with arch and impatient curiosity; "I hope you won't pretend to say, Miss Singleton, that he is not handsome, because, if you do, there's nobody will believe you."

"I really am no judge, Olive, and therefore will not pretend to say any thing at all about it," cried Agatha, with some little hesitation in her manner, and a slight suffusion of colour passing over her intelligent countenance, but Olive was by no means satisfied with this reply, and added,—

"What, cannot you tell whether you like a person or not, Miss Singleton? that is very strange!"

"Not at all, Olive, if you felt as I do now," cried Agatha.

"And how is that?" inquired the curious Olive.

This was certainly a most unfortunate question which Olive put to her blushing companion; for Agatha blushed deeply, without exactly knowing why she did so, in answering,—

"Why, I feel that I have seen and known so little of Lord Montague that I ought not to give an opinion of him, good, bad, or indifferent, and I beg you will not again importune me on that subject."

"My gracious, Miss Singleton! and where is the harm of it?" retorted Olive, "that you need colour up to the eyes about it? he's no match for you, nor me, to be sure, so you need not be so much alarmed about him; he won't fall in love with you, I will answer for it!"

"I should be exceedingly sorry if he did," replied Agatha; "for, were that the case, he would certainly be disappointed in the expectation of meeting with any encouragement; but pray, Olive, cease this silly nonsense on a subject so extremely ridiculous: it is not likely that the splendid heir of the Marquis of Montault, if he knows himself rightly, would bestow a thought on an object so insignificant as me. Gentlemen of his exalted rank, Olive, have higher views, more suited to the dignified station which they support, and poverty is not the channel to which they direct their attentions."

There never was a speech more likely to check, and at the same time, to silence the increasing impertinence of Olive, nor

; one so humble and humiliating on the part of Agatha, yet it was the only extinguisher she could put on Olive's tongue; and the fisher, who had tarried behind, in order to give some further instructions before he quitted the Cottage, having now overtaken them on the beach, the subject of Lord Montague was finally dropped, to the very great relief and satisfaction of Agatha, who soon perceived that the vain and very weak-minded girl would easily have been talked into the supposition that there was a chance of her actually being likely to succeed in captivating the affections even of Lord Montague, in repeating whose name, Agatha resolved to be particularly cautious and delicate, as, should any thing transpire of the myrtle, which she was now fully convinced was his lordship's mysterious gift, she might be brought into some unpleasant dilemma, with respect to her being under the necessity of giving an elucidation on so mysterious a part of his lordship's conduct, in having made her the subject of his poetical effusions, the nature of which she herself could not perfectly understand, never, as she imagined, having beheld Lord Montague but that once at the Cottage on the Cliff.

Agatha called to her mind, also, the voice she had so mysteriously heard one night, while sitting in her chamber, beneath her window, but the tones of that voice were not like those of Lord Montague,—she felt convinced that they were not; and if it was not the voice of Lord Montague, whose else could it be?—that was utterly impossible for her to tell; but it might be possible that Lord Montague might have some connection with it. If her fate, in which it appears he had taken so singular and extraordinary an interest, was really of such consequence to him, as his poetical effusions addressed to her had insinuated, he had adopted a most imprudent and improper method of showing it, and one that was far more likely to expose her to censure and even ridicule, than to gain the approbation of her protector; for were the mysterious conduct of his lordship once known to the fisher, he would not only highly disapprove of such overtures of friendship being made to her, but, possibly, in the moment of his displeasure, acquaint the Marchioness with the clandestine proceedings of her son, with an object, over whose actions he felt it was his duty, as

her protector, to watch with an anxious and careful eye; and, in such a case, Lord Montague would inevitably be exposed to the severe reproaches of his jealous mother, and she herself become the object of her ladyship's contempt and aversion,—and for what? merely because that son had chose to address a parcel of idle and unnecessary compliments to her, under the disguise of a mysterious friend. But Agatha felt too conscious of the respect which she exclusively owed to herself, to lose it for the sake of youthful vanity, or to encourage the overtures of friendship, when under a masked and mysterious disguise: for Agatha was not of a romantic or amorous turn; she had been accustomed to receive the worst impressions of mankind in the convent of the Holy Sisters, and taught to know by her father, that men do not offer friendship to women, without a strong and powerful motive of self-interest being always attached to it, in some shape or other, and 't generally ends in professions of a softer but more treacherous kind.

Determined, therefore, in concealing the knowledge both of the myrtle and the poetry, which was addressed to her by Lord Montague, from the fisher, and to appear herself unconscious of ever having received it, she desired Claribelle once again to remove the tree into another apartment, as she had no reason to suppose that it belonged to her, more than to any other part of the family; on which Claribelle uttered an exclamation of involuntary surprise; for it was probable that the cheeks of her lovely mistress were suffused with the brightest vermillion as she gave this peremptory order.

"My gracious, Miss Agatha!" uttered she, "what can you dislike that beautiful myrtle-tree for? and, if it was not intended for you, why was it placed just directly under your chamber window, with the pretty verses too into the bargain, written too, I dare say, by a handsome young man. Well, I must needs own, Miss Agatha, that you are very cruel to slight him so; but if you will have it so, why, it must be so, and I will carry the pretty myrtle into Miss Olive's chamber, where I have no doubt but it will soon wither and perish: she has no taste for things of this sort, and it must needs die for want of care."

"And why cannot you take care of it in another apartment, as well as in this?" cried Agatha.

"And why cannot it remain here?" demanded Claribelle, with more displeasure marked in her countenance than she dared to express by her words.

"Claribelle," cried Agatha, in a calm and placid tone, though with a look which instantly checked the freedom of her attendant, "you know that I am not accustomed to be so interrogated; I should be unwilling to remind you of that duty which you never forgot when I had a father to protect me, and you a kind and indulgent master, which you were always ready to obey, without inquiry into his motives, remember that I will not again have mine called to an account by you. I desire you to remove that myrtle-tree out of my chamber; I have urgent reasons for so doing, and if satisfactory to me, they can be of no consequence to you."

With these words, Agatha having put on her usual attire, quitted her chamber to go down stairs to dinner, well knowing that this hint to Claribelle would answer the desired effect, and that it would not be necessary to repeat her commands. Still, by mere chance, her eyes were directed to the myrtle-tree, as she advanced toward the door, and, as she bestowed on it a last look, she fancied that her heart reproached her with something like ingratitude toward its donor. He had reproached her too, with neglecting, and even despising, this gift of a sincere friend.

But what proofs had he given her of his friendship, than merely the presentation of a flower? and friendship and love are perishable, thought Agatha, even as the blossom on that tree; nor will I suffer my heart to be caught by the illusion, however flattering and pleasing to the eye.

Finding, therefore, that she had done nothing to reproach her conduct with, in respect to Lord Montague, she tripped down the stairs with a lighter step even than usual, and on her entrance to the oak parlour, where the table was spread for dinner, the first object who arose, and respectfully inquired after her health, was Sam Russel, who had been invited to stay to dinner by the fisher, and with whom he was in deep and earnest conversation, when

Agatha suddenly broke in upon them? previous to which, however, she heard the fisher, in answer to something that Sam Russel had addressed to him, distinctly pronounce the following sentence:—

“Shiver my top-sails, if I know what to say to thee, lad in such a ticklish business! I know thee beest as good a lad as ever breathed the breath of life, and thee be as comely and as fresh as a rose, Sam; but Lord love thee, thee wont do for a husband for Agatha Singleton. Wounds! she will look up to a higher than thee, Sam, though she be a poor orphan girl.—Her father was a gentleman, and she be a lady.”

Agatha could scarcely give credit to the actual evidence of her senses, on hearing these words pronounced by the fisher, which must certainly have arisen on a declaration being made by Sam Russel, whose favourable impressions toward her she had long been conscious of, but had ever kept at the most profound distance; feeling indeed but too sensible of what her protector had bluntly observed, that Sam Russel, although certainly a very good young man, was yet no husband for Agatha Singleton, and confounded, abashed, and even embarrassed, she would instantly have retreated up stairs again, had not the dinner at that precise moment come upon the table, Jessy and Olive following, the latter having found sufficient employment on her hands since she had returned home, in retailing to Jessy all the incidents that had passed at the Cottage on the Cliff, in which the very particular attentions which Lord Montague had paid her, were not forgotten to be twice or thrice enumerated.

“And did he pay no attentions to Miss Singleton?” inquired Jessy.

“My gracious!—no;” answered Olive, somewhat pettishly; “have I not told you over and over again, that he did not so much as think it worth his while once to look at her, though she had got on such a beautiful worked muslin robe?—and, Oh! how she coloured! she was finely mortified in seeing his lordship sit himself down close beside me, and chat away as if we had been old acquaintances;—my gracious! how I enjoyed it!”

“Not look once at Agatha Singleton?” repeated Jessy, in the

utmost astonishment ; " indeed, Olive, I can scarcely credit your assertion, for never did I see Agatha look so beautiful ; and if Lord Montague had eyes at all, he must have admired so lovely a creature."

" But, mayhap, he had only eyes for somebody else who was sitting close beside him," cried Olive, with an envious sneer ; and mayhap, Miss Jessy, he admired somebody else a great deal better : a pretty thing, indeed, that nobody is to be thought handsome but Miss Singleton ! but I would have you to know, Miss Jessy, that I think myself quite as much of a beauty as she, and, when father dies, I shall have a fortune."

" Miss Olive, the dinner is waiting," cried David, popping his head rather unopportunately in at the door.

" Coming this moment," cried Olive, but not making the least advance toward the door ; " so Miss Jessy, as I was saying, that Agatha Singleton is——"

" As much your superior without a fortune," exclaimed Jessy, " as you would be her inferior, Olive, let your fortune be what it will."—And left Olive to follow her into the parlour, as soon as she could sufficiently digest the bitterness of this remark.

CHAPTER XIX.

" Oh, what a weak inconstant world is this !
Where every moment savours of despair ;
Where sorrow creeps in every cup of bliss,
And every joy is sicklied o'er with care.

When first we enter life's bewilder'd plain,
Each varying pleasure seems to mark the way ;
But ah, how soon the lesson do we gain ;
And curse the short experience of a day !"

During dinner, very little conversation was kept up by the parties, for not one of them appeared to be in their usual temperature of disposition. Poor Sam Rumel, in consequence of the disclo-

sure he had made of his passion for Agatha Singleton, and the little encouragement he had met with from the fisher to imagine that his addresses would ever be favourably received by the lovely object of his affections, looked the very image of despair ; while Agatha, knowing herself to be the cause of it, and feeling deeply hurt, as well as deeply mortified, at Sam Russel conceiving that she was a proper or an equal object for him to offer any overtures of a tender kind, was more reserved than ever in her manners toward him, though neither scornful, or affecting a consequence that did not belong to her. Olive, too, pouted, and was sullen, because her sister Jessy had put her out of humour by making comparisons between her and Miss Singleton : and Jessy herself was out of spirits, because she perceived that those of her lovely friend were tempered with more sadness than usual ; and, no stranger to the partiality that Sam Russel had for Agatha, actually imagined that he had been disclosing it to her, and that he had not only met with a severe repulse from Miss Singleton, but a reproof from her father ; for the fisher did not look pleased, though he invited Sam very freely to partake of the repast which was set before him.

"Why don't you eat, Sam ?" exclaimed he ; "but, mayhap, you cannot ; shiver my top-sails ! what is the use of being down-hearted, mau ? why don't you talk a bit to the girls, and see if they wont raise your spirits ? though, there's Olly looking as black as a thunder-storm after a gale of wind, and Jess don't seem to be quite in sorts to-day ; and my dear little Agatha Singleton, she is a bit rummish too ; so, what between the one and the other, you and I, Sam, will get on the lee-shore, if we don't look out for squalls ; shall us get groggy, or what ?—and leave the lasses by themselves, till they get into a better humour. Jess, go and tell Davy to set the old round oak table in t'other parlour, and a bottle of brandy, and plenty of pipes and tobacco ; and let you and I, Sam, sheer off, till we can find pleasanter weather, and smiling faces."

"I am willing to do whatever you please, Sir," uttered Sam, in a very desponding tone ; "I own I am somewhat flat to-day, and that is the truth of it."

"Flat as a flounder !" cried the fisher, and laughed.

"But I am by no means willing to make others so," rejoined Sam, "by intruding my company where it is not agreeable," added he, giving a side-glance toward Agatha, with increased spirit, while she blushingly cast her eyes down in silence, hardly knowing what to say, and not wishing to say any thing at all, if she could possibly avoid it.

But Olive, imagining that Sam had directed this speech entirely to her, conscious of the ill-humour she had betrayed during the whole time she had sat at dinner, and tired of having nobody to talk to, burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, while she exclaimed,—

"Well, Sam, you need not show your airs off to me; 'tis not I alone that am to blame for not conversing with you, and if your company is not agreeable to me, it don't seem to be any more so with other folks; but Miss Jessy always finds a hole to creep out at, and so does some other people, who shall be nameless."

Agatha now coloured deeply, and, perhaps, feeling that, in this particular instance, she had certainly been equally blameable as Olive; for she had scarcely addressed a word to Sam Russel, though he had several times made an effort to enter into conversation with her, mildly answered,—

"But I have a name, Olive, and will willingly answer to any charge which is made against it, if, indeed, I am really in fault with respect to my not conversing so freely as I was wont to do with one of your father's guests, to whom it is my duty to pay every proper and prudent attention, and my not doing so is neither because I dislike his company, or wish to imagine that mine has any particular attraction for him. I would not willingly offend any one, much less one whom I behold under the roof of my protector; but I have really this morning been strangely fluttered with one thing or another at the Cottage on the Cliff. I am unaccustomed to the sight of strangers, much less to the transaction of matters of business with them; and, however ridiculous it may seem, as I dare say it is so, it has totally unhinged my spirits for further conversation. I think this apology necessary, in some measure, to explain the nature of my present feelings, when they are not sufficiently understood, or misinterpreted by others; and

I hope it is not requisite to offer any more on this occasion to Mr. Russel, if he imagines that I would willingly show him any neglect."

The manner and the tone of voice in which this was uttered, would have disarmed anger in the fiercest breast; how, then, did it operate on the feelings of one, naturally open-hearted and benevolent, and actually adoring the object by whom it was spoken, and, while the ill-natured Olive looked perfectly abashed and confounded by the modest and frank ingenuousness of the charming speaker, Sam Russel rapturously exclaimed, and vainly cherishing a hope that his addresses would, when known, not be utterly rejected by so sweet, kind, and generous a creature;

"(Oblend me, Miss Singleton! I am sure you cannot do that very easily; unless I was certain that I was the object of your hatred and aversion, for to be despised by such a young lady as you, I should think the greatest misfortune that could ever happen to me."

"Shiver my top-sails!" cried the fisher, "and I do believe, Sam, that be the truest word thee ever spoke in all thy born days! thee be an honest heart of oak; so bear away my lad, and let hys be thy direct anchor."

"The pipes and tobacco are all ready, Sir, and I have put the bottle of brandy on the oak table in the little parlour," cried Davy, whose appearance at this moment was the most seasonable relief to Agatha that she ever experienced, for it was too apparent in what light the sentiments of Sam Russel toward her would be henceforth received by the fisher and his family, and it was also as apparent, that the declaration he had made of his regard for her to her protector was not by any means displeasing to him, and that he would probably find in him an advocate to plead in his behalf; but this Agatha determined she would resolutely oppose, and only waited for an opportunity of decidedly rejecting all overtures of this kind from Sam Russel, whenever they were decidedly proposed to her, for he was certainly no object of attention to her, though she was unfortunately so to him, yet that was no reason why she should be compelled to accept of his addresses: her obligations to her protector were undoubtedly great, and she would

ever gratefully acknowledge them, as far as the ties of gratitude bound her; but over her affections he had no control, and, in the disposal of her hand, no authority. Had her dear father been living, he would have left her wholly free in this respect, neither would such an object as Sam Russel have been selected by her father as the husband of his choice for her. There were certainly traits of an uncommon good disposition in the young man, and his person was by no means the objectionable part of him; but was he in mind, in education, or in taste and sentiment, correspondent with her own? could she look up to such a man for the dear partner of her heart, and feel proud of the conquest she had made over his affections? No, she could not; besides, there were some comparisons, unhappily drawn by Agatha at this moment of serious reflection, not much in favour of the young fisher; for she had that morning seen Lord Montague, with whose personal graces, and elegant manliness of figure and deportment, and that of the young fisher's, certainly no comparison could be made but one, considerably preponderating to the disadvantage of honest Samuel. But Agatha did not know how it happened, that, at this very precise moment, Lord Montague should come into her head, and was extremely angry at asking herself that question; for what were the attractions of Lord Montague Montault to her?

Ah, what a puzzling and tormenting question! and feeling that it was so, it brought deeper tints of the rose on the face and bosom of our lovely heroine, than she was at all conscious the name of Lord Montague had the power of impressing there: he was nothing to her,—and what was the young fisher?—why, nothing to—yet she felt no blush burn upon her cheek, and gently infuse itself into her bosom, in repeating the name of Sam. He might be a fine young fellow, but she had never caught her eyes once glancing at the expression of his countenance, and actually did not know whether Sam Russel's eyes were black, or blue, or brown, or gray; but what eyes had Lord Montague Montault? why, they were certainly blue, and of the brightest blue, for they had beamed on her with an expression of a peculiar kind, so she was positively certain that his eyes were blue, and not black;—but what were his eyes to her? Ah, my gentle heroine! another, and a deeper

blush, it again asking yourself such a question: you had better not be so inquisitive, lest you provoke a little blind boy to give thee an answer that may puzzle thee. Be quiet, my pretty Agatha, while I proceed to matters of more importance than the eyes of Lord Blust.

As ~~soon~~ had the fisher and Sam made their exit into the little garden, to regale over a pipe of tobacco, and the young ladies were left to themselves, than the following conversation immediately took place between them, began on the part of the curious Olive, who, suspecting the real cause of poor Sam's evident dejection of spirits by the speech which he had addressed to Agatha, was exceedingly anxious to know whether it was likely that he would ever be a favoured lover, and, without considering a moment on the delicacy or impropriety of interrogating Agatha on such a subject, exclaimed,—

"So, the cat is out of the bag, now, sister Jessy; I always told you what Sam Russel came so often for to Herring Dale, whether he was invited or not; it was not for your company, or mine, Jessy, it was for the pleasure of seeing you, Miss Singleton, whom, it is plain enough, he wants to marry: will you have him, Miss Singleton? he is a very good young man, and has got a good bit of money; and folks say, when his old grandmother dies, that he will have a great deal more; you had better have him,—you wont have such an offer again."

Agatha, for a few moments, chose to remain indignantly silent to so rude and insolent an observation; but Jessy, highly provoked with her sister's impertinence to an object every way her superior, resentfully replied,—

"I much wonder, Olive, that you are not ashamed of such a want of decency and good manners to Miss Singleton, who, though she is kind enough not to retaliate on you for such conduct, cannot but feel herself deeply hurt at your behaviour."

"Dear Jessy, you are yourself too much concerned at what I actually would not give myself the smallest trouble to resent," cried Agatha, with considerable warmth and spirit; "there is nothing that Miss Blust chooses to say that can occasion me the slightest uneasiness, and I am never deeply hurt at any thing she

utters; she may try to shoot her arrows, but she will always miss her aim, in supposing that they will ever wound my heart, much less rankle there; she amuses me, indeed, but she can never provoke me to anger: I am above such paltry, such insignificant remarks."

"I know you are, my dear and amiable friend," cried Jessy, hardly able to suppress her tears, on the recollection of how much rudeness she had patiently endured from Olive on various occasions; "yet, still I lament that any relative of mine should so far forget themselves."

Olive, now affecting the utmost surprise that she could have uttered any thing half so offensive to the feelings of Miss Singleton as Jessy had so severely taxed her with exclaimed,—

"My gracious, Jessy! what a piece of work you are making about what I said to Miss Singleton only out of a bit of fun! I protest I only meant to make game of Sam, and to give Miss Singleton some good advice, that was all, I am sure, and if she is angry about it, I cannot help it."

"I thought I had told you that it was not in your power to make me angry, and why will you urge me to repeat it to you, Olive, that you cannot do so from any observations you have made on Mr. Samuel Russel, and, as to any advice you may think it necessary to give me, pray reserve it, my dear girl, for yourself,—you will have plenty of occasion for it hereafter;—be not so liberal of it at the present moment, nor foolishly waste it on one who does not require your assistance; for, if I mistake not, Olive, you will one day sadly stand in need of advice from the lips of real and undisguised friendship: Heaven grant you may not at the same moment stand in need of protection! There are false lovers, as well as false friends,—of both beware; and think, if you can reflect at all, of the warning given you now by the despised Agatha Singleton!"

The face and neck of Olive were both coloured with the deepest crimson; she could not be insensible to where the allusion pointed in this warning, so affectingly given her by Agatha Singleton, and she had some consciousness about her that her cousin Crafty's conduct had not of late been quite so honourable or sincere, as from

his professions of impassioned fondness she had expected; yet the vanity, and, alas! the weakness of this too credulous girl was easily reconciled to this seeming want of sincerity in her lover, by the fond idea that she was the only woman in the world whom he passionately adored, and that he considered her the most beautiful of her sex,—and was not this sufficient, oh! more than sufficient, to atone for the little omissions that Leontine had lately been guilty of toward her? and would he not shortly return from the herring fishery, and breathe anew his professions of ardent love and adoration in her ear; and was not the voice of Leontine sweeter and more melodious than the music of the spheres? and, perhaps, Leontine would lay all his fortune at her feet, and marry her!—perhaps? there was no perhaps in the case, for he had told her that he would,—and who could doubt so sweet, so fond, so passionate a lover? In short, the silly Olive had so many reasons to adduce for Leontine being faithful and honourable toward her, when he came back from the herring fishery, that the warning just given her by Agatha Singleton rested as lightly on her mind as the dew on opening flowers when the leaves are shaken; and the deep crimson blush which had at first betrayed her consciousness that Leontine might prove unworthy of her affections, notwithstanding all his violent declarations of regard and fondness, quickly faded from her countenance, which she artfully contrived to dress in smiles; by no means willing to let her sister Jessy see that the warning given by Agatha so impressively, was either dreaded by her, or a subject she thought of the slightest consequence: with affected playfulness, therefore, she exclaimed,—

“I am sure I have no lovers that I need be afraid of, Miss Singleton, so you have no occasion to alarm yourself on my account; I am not such a fool as you and my sister Jessy take me for, I assure you; I know when a man means fairly and honourably by me, as well as most folks, though they pretend to be so wise and so cunning.”

“To be cunning, Olive, is no proof of wisdom,” answered Agatha, smiling, “but I have sometimes heard of cunning fools, too wise even for themselves: but a truce to arguments so futile. Since you will not understand me, you must use your own discre-

tion to guide you through the mazes of a labyrinth, from which may you ever escape from the dangers of your own credulity and inexperience! Let us, then, no longer converse on a subject so unpleasing."

"Aye, do let us talk of something else, pray, Miss Singleton," cried Olive, "for I protest, Jessy's long face, and your grave conversation, have somehow or other made me serious; and I hate any thing that is serious; now, I was thinking, that while father and Sam Russel are settling the affairs of the nation over their pipes and tobacco, how nicely we might just step over to Margaret Craftly, and take a dish of tea with her;—Have you any objection, Miss Singleton?"

Agatha, whose beautiful countenance had resumed its natural soft and celestial expression, without retaining an atom of resentment against Olive, now replied with the most good-humoured sweetness,—

"Not in the least, Olive, provided it is agreeable to Jessy, and your father is apprised of our intentions; but certainly I would not choose to go there without his permission."

"Miss Singleton!" cried Olive, laughing, "what signifies asking father, who will be three hours or more over his pipe and tobacco, and would be quite angry if any one was to go and disturb him from it: cannot you go outside the door without his knowing of it?"

"No, Olive, I don't think it at all proper, that any of us should be where he does not know," answered Agatha, with grave and serious expression; "a father has a right to know in what company his children are at all times."

"How formal and precise!" cried Olive; "but since you choose to be so very particular, Miss Singleton, had you not better go and tell him yourself, that we are going to Margaret Craftly's? for I don't intend to take that trouble, I promise you; I never think of asking father where I choose to go, whenever I have a mind,—do I, Jessy? besides, poor Sam will be so happy to obtain a sight of you, if it be only for a moment,—he will be ready to jump out of his skin."

"Then I certainly do not intend to procure him that gratifica-

tion, you saucy girl," cried Agatha, playfully, "and must choose Jessy for my ambassadress on this occasion. Jessy, my darling, will you go and tell your father that we are going to Miss Craftly's? and I will go and get my bonnet and shawl."

"And so will I," exclaimed Olive; "and Jess, I will bring down yours,—shall I, darling?"

There was a peculiar expression of irony, half jest, half earnest, that hung upon Olive's lip, as she bestowed this last epithet upon her sister, who had flown on the instant to obey Agatha's command, and Jessy did not hear it; but it was far from being noticed by our lovely heroine, who rather pitied than condemned the uncomfortable feelings that must lodge in a bosom so prone to jealousy and envy as was that of Olive Blust, and excited against so gentle and unoffending a being as the mild and sweet Jessy; and Agatha felt rejoiced that the sarcastic tone in which her sister had spoken to her, had not reached the ear of this affectionate girl, who returned in less than ten minutes from the mission which she had undertaken exclaiming,—

"Dear Miss Singleton! I have succeeded,—father will let us go to our kinswoman's to tea, but has laid positive commands on us to return home to supper; he says he leaves it all to you, dearest Agatha, for he knows that you would not willingly depart from his requests."

"Oh, do put on your bonnet and scarf, Jessy!" cried Olive, who was impatient to be gone; "and don't keep Miss Singleton and I waiting here all night, to hear all the ridiculous nonsense of what father says, just as if we were not old enough to take care of ourselves."

And away Olive scampered, leaving her sister and Agatha to follow her when they pleased; and our heroine, taking the arm of Jessy, began to overtake her at the declivity of the hill, which was yet at a considerable distance from the habitation of Margaret Craftly; and Olive not being in hearing, Jessy addressed the following sentence, in a low and tremulous voice to her companion;—

"How impatient is Olive to get to Margaret's this evening! do you not observe her exceeding anxiety, my dear Miss Singleton?" to which Agatha replied, in as low a whisper,—

"I do, Jessy, and I fear she has other motives than merely the seeing Margaret, in going there this evening."

"Yet Leontine is not returned from the fishery, at least, I have not heard of his arrival from Sam, with whom he is so intimately acquainted," cried Jessy. There was a time when I was accustomed to watch this period with the most unceasing anxiety, and to hail it as the welcome harbinger of joy, peace, and happiness."

"Be thankful that this period is passed, and that you no longer hail it with rapture or delight!" exclaimed Agatha, in the most energetic tone, and gently pressing the hand that was linked with her own.

"I do, I am thankful," uttered Jessy; "do not imagine that I am so weak as to regret it, or wish that period to return again to Jessy."

"Heaven forbid that it were so, my dear girl," cried Agatha, "and already do I fear the apostacy of that licentious being, Craftly, to your sister, as well as to yourself. Imprudent Olive! how speedily will she repent of having bestowed her affections on a libertine, who never yet was true or faithful to mortal woman. Leontine is false to her, believe me, Jessy, as he has been to you. The heart of a libertine knows not what it is to love. How can that man love one woman, who seeks to betray all? Impossible, my dear girl; he may talk of love indeed, but his heart has never glowed with half so pure and tender a passion, for his passions resemble those of a demon, calculated only to destroy the happiness of the being who looks up to him for protection; surely, surely Olive will be convinced in time of the deception of Craftly, whom I strongly suspect is even now forming some stratagem for obtaining a clandestine correspondence with her, through the medium of some unknown and mysterious visiter at Herring Dale."—And Agatha for the first time imparted to Jessy the incident she had met with one night at her chamber-window:—"Since which, Jessy," added Agatha, "I have always suspected that Leontine Craftly has some secret intelligence of whatever is passing beneath your father's roof. The voice was indeed familiar to my ear, but it was not the voice of your kinsman, Craftly, nor that of Russel."

"But it might be the voice of the invisible poet, who presented you with the myrtle-tree, dear Agatha," said Jessy with a smile.

"Oh, no, I am very sure that it was not him," cried Agatha, blushing deeply at Jessy's observation.

"Why, do you know who it was that gave you that myrtle-tree?" inquired Jessy, artlessly.

To which Agatha, with modest hesitation replied,—

"I will not say that I do not, because I do not see the necessity of concealing this circumstance from one in whose breast I can place the most implicit confidence. It was by mere accident, Jessy, that I discovered the giver of that myrtle to be—Lord Montague."

"Lord Montague," repeated Jessy, with astonishment, "how you surprise me, dearest Agatha, and yet you never beheld Lord Montague but once,—this morning at the Cottage on the Cliff."

"Never, to my recollection," answered Agatha: "but it is very evident that he has seen me somewhere."

"And seeing you, Agatha, it was not easy to forget you," uttered Jessy, with somewhat of an arch smile, which could not be mistaken by her lovely friend.

But what was Jessy's surprise, when she answered her in the following manner;

"Not another sentence of Lord Montague, if you love me, Jessy; never to me again let the name of Lord Montague escape your lips: Jessy, I have the most urgent reasons for repeating this request."

To which Jessy almost immediately replied, (observing with still greater astonishment the deep expression of serious concern which was imprinted on every feature of Agatha.)—"And if you had not urgent reasons for repeating this request, dearest Miss Singleton, do not imagine that I would be so unguarded, so ungrateful, as to mention it to a living soul; every word you utter to me is sacred as holy records from above,"

"I believe it, dear Jessy," cried Agatha, "and will converse with you more freely on this subject at a fitter opportunity; at present, there is danger of being overheard, at least by Olive, who is now coming toward us."

Olive now approached them within a few steps, and seemed panting for breath; at length, having recovered, she exclaimed,—

“Have you seen the old gypsy woman, with a red cloak and grey beard, that was gathering up cockles just now on the sands? I protest I would have had my fortune told, only I was so frightened at her appearance, for she looked more like an old hermit than a woman, though she had red petticoats on.”

“We have seen nothing of her as yet,” cried Agatha, “but surely, Olive, you would not be so ridiculous as to be imposed on by such creatures, or seek to search for mysteries which they have no power to unfold.”

“Oh! but I am sure they have though,” cried Olive, “for I have had my fortune told by a gypsy before now, and every word came true; did it not Jessy?”

“Yes, when you told her what to say,” said Jessy, laughing; “it was not likely she would miss her mark.”

“Well, I protest I wish the old woman would overtake us before we get to Margaret’s,” cried Olive, “she should tell my fortune immediately: I should like to know whether”—

Olive, now colouring deeply, thought proper to make a full stop; but her meaning was perfectly understood: and they were proceeding at a very rapid pace toward the habitation of Margaret Craftly, when Olive happening to look behind her in the same direction where she had seen the old gypsy, suddenly exclaimed,—

“Oh, my gracious! look, Jessy; look, Miss Singleton; there is the old woman trotting behind us, with her basket and her staff. Let us stop, and see if she will say any thing to us.”

“Nonsense, Olive! it is exceedingly improper,” cried Agatha; “what can you suppose she will have to say to us, except imposing a parcel of idle tales upon us, in order to draw some money from us.”

“Well, and where is the harm of giving the poor old woman a few pence,” rejoined Olive.

“There is certainly no harm attached to that part of the business, if you wish it,” cried Agatha, “and I have no objection to give the old woman my mite too into the bargain, but not on the score of her having any knowledge of the mystic art.”

By this time the old woman, (certainly a gypsy in her appearance, and one of the most extraordinary stature,) had come close up to them, and surveyed them with no very pleasing aspect; which indeed Olive, who clung fast to Agatha's arm, partly from fear, and partly from anxiety to address her in the following terms:—

“Good-day to you mother!”—on which the old woman, scowling from beneath a pair of large grey and bushy eyebrows, uttered in a surly tone,—

“Mother to *you*, daughter! I am no mother, thank the Fates—you *may* be—*will* be,—there's naught on earth will prevent it.”

Olive now suddenly quitted the arm of her lovely protectress, and springing to the side of the old gypsy, eagerly demanded to know if she would tell her fortune: “and here's money for you,” cried the impatient Olive, flinging into her basket of cockles some silver, which the old woman deliberately took out again and returned with scorn, while she uttered the following sentence in the most discordant tones,—

“Money!” exclaimed she, “and think'st thou I deal in money, that pander to knaves and fools; that demon's curse, to tempt the wicked to betray the innocent; that devil which rides uppermost in man's insatiate heart, nor rests till the hand of death has shut it out. Money! no, daughter, I will have naught to do with money.”

“What shall I give thee, then, mother, to tell me my fortune?” cried Olive, yet more impatiently than before; while Agatha, struck by her extraordinary appearance as well as by the singularity of her manner and language, was observing her with the most profound attention; when she replied in a more softened accent,—

“Thou can'st not give me what I want, child;—poor chick, thou dost not know what is good for thyself, or thou wouldst not seek to know thy fortune. Wait till it comes; it wont tarry long, I promise thee; 'tis in the web of time, and time is on the wing. Art thou satisfied?”

“My gracious!” cried Olive, laughing, “what have you said to satisfy me, I should be glad to know?”

"Enough, if thou art wise," cried the old woman, with a horrible grin; and Agatha now began to be seriously alarmed that they had encountered a maniac or something worse, from the manner of so strange and singular a being, and entreated Olive to let her alone, if she did not wish to accept of any trifling presents from them, and to proceed on their walk. But Olive, ever perverse and contradictory, persisted in tormenting the old gypsy with asking a variety of questions, till, highly provoked, and out of all patience with the silly and weak-minded girl, Agatha exclaimed,—

"Olive! why will you persist in such ridiculous behaviour, at the same time that you annoy this good old woman with questions, which, if she did know, she is too wise to answer? Come, let us begone to your cousin Margaret's before the shades of evening come on; see, the sun is setting fast."

In a moment the old woman fixed her eyes full on the face of Agatha, but she no longer looked with a scowling aspect; and, softening her voice to a tone of peculiar sadness, she sighed deeply while she murmured forth,—

"Beauteous maiden, may the sun that lights the youthful spring of thy happiness never set in sadness, as it dawned on thy infant birth! Alas, sweet maid! in the fairest flowers too oft we see the canker-worm invade the blossom ere the fruit be blown!—yet will the guardian of thy innocence and virtue avert a reptile's curse! An angel's prayers shall save thee, loveliest, from the hand of harm!"—Surprise, and astonishment, not unmixed with fear, now assailed the feelings of the wonder-struck Agatha, on hearing the old gypsy pronounce such mysterious words, which were accompanied with so much energy and peculiarity of manner toward her alone: How could she tell what misery had dawned on her infant birth, or what happiness might yet be in store for her? and, though she could not treat the subject with youthful levity, she was very far from believing that the old gypsy had, or could have, any prescience of her future destiny, or could avert the evils of her fate. Agatha had been taught by her father never to imbibe principles of a superstitious nature, or that inclined to the least colouring of doubt of the unerring power of one Supreme

Being alone mighty and infinite, but absolute and unchangeable in his dispensations to the creatures formed by his own hand, the destination of whom belongs, and is known only to Himself: it cannot be a prescience given to mortals, who, like ourselves, are formed only out of the self-same clay, and do not know the peculiar misery or happiness of their own fate. How, then, can they tell it to others? it would puzzle the wisest philosopher, we believe, to answer this question.

But to proceed:—Agatha did not precisely tell the old woman that she knew as little of her future destiny as she did of her own, but smilingly thanked her for the favourable presage she had augured of her fate, and besought her to accept of some trifle which she might have about her, in token of her gratitude.

“And wilt thou give me what I shall ask of thee, maiden?” cried the old gypsy, with a sudden transition from sadness to the most brisk and vivacious humour; which made Agatha again resume her former opinion, that the old woman’s intellects were certainly deranged, and she answered with great timidity,—

“I will certainly not refuse you, if it be in my power.”

“Give me that sprig of myrtle which now decorates thy lovely bosom,” uttered the old woman; “and it will be far more precious to me than rubies or diamonds.”

“You are jesting now,” cried Agatha, deeply blushing, and not endeavouring to make any advances toward removing the myrtle from her snowy breast.

“I am serious, maiden,” cried the old woman; “I am not used to jest,—give me that myrtle, or, refusing it, you will have wormwood planted in that breast of snow; take your choice ere you bid me farewell.”

“Dearest Agatha,” cried the trembling Jessy, “give her the myrtle, and let her begone.”

“For God’s sake, Miss Singleton, give the old wretch the myrtle!” whispered Olive, who had adopted a similar idea with Agatha, that the old gypsy was crazy, “for I begin to be terribly afraid of her; we shall certainly be bewitched by her before we get to Margaret’s.”

Thus compelled by necessity alone, and the fears of both Jessy



GIVE ME THAT MYRTLE OR REFUSING IT YOU WILL HAVE WORM-
WOOD PLANTED IN THAT BREAK OF SNOW



and Olive, Agatha drew from her beauteous bosom the gift of Lord Montague Montault, and unwillingly placing it in the hands of the old woman, exclaimed,—

“Since you require so trifling a favour, and will take no other, receive it, though I would you had not taken a fancy to that in particular.”

“And if so trifling, why dost thou prize it, maiden?” inquired the gypsy.

“I did not tell you that I prized it,” retorted Agatha, with a brighter tint glowing on her lovely cheek.

“Then why do you feel regret at parting with it?” quickly answered she.

Agatha was silent: she averted her head from the piercing glance of the old woman, who, casting on her a look of almost undefinable expression, pronounced the following words:—“Before the leaves of this myrtle wither we shall meet again;” and darting into the deep embowering shades that were before her, instantaneously disappeared from their view, leaving Agatha and the two sisters with no other impression on their minds, than of the old woman being insane; and they lost not a moment, with no small terror and alarm by the apprehension of her again pursuing them, in endeavouring to reach as soon as possible the habitation of Margaret Craftly.

CHAPTER XX.

"Dear are the bonds of consanguinity,
Holy, paternal, and fraternal love,
Yet to vow perpetual virginity,
Still in the circle of those ties to move,
Thy wonted reason, dearest doth not prove ;
Nor that bless'd sweetness that belongs to thee,
Nor goodness that I prize all charms above ;
Oh, mine's no sophistry, but homely truth !
What sin were it to waste such loveliness and youth !

OLIVE was the first almost in breathless accents to relate to Margaret the incident they had met with, and the alarm they had undergone, at the singular manner, appearance, and language of the old gypsy woman, and what she had said to Miss Singleton. Meanwhile Jessy and Agatha had seated themselves, without having the power to articulate a sentence ; the former having actually been under the influence of terror and fright, and the latter feeling regret at being obliged to part with her branch of myrtle, which she could not account for ; since, at the very best, what was it but a mere sprig of myrtle, which she could easily replace, if she wanted it, from the very tree itself. The prediction of the old gypsy, that she was shortly to meet her again, did not give her a moment's uneasiness, as she attributed all that she had addressed to her as the mere wanderings of a disturbed imagination : still,—during tea, which was immediately ordered in by Margaret, who endeavoured to chase from their minds all apprehension of again seeing the old woman, and assuring them that Nicholas should see them safe home to Herring Dale,—still our lovely heroine could not help deploring the loss of her myrtle, blushing deeply as she exclaimed,—

"I should not have minded if she had asked me for any thing else I had about me but that sprig of myrtle, and it is really something singularly strange, that it was only to this myrtle she should take a fancy."

"And she said that before the leaves were withered she would meet you again, Miss Singleton," cried Olive ; "my gracious ! I

am so happy that she did not take just such a fancy to any thing I had ! for I verily believe that she is a witch, and can bewitch every body she has a mind."

"I do not believe in witches, and therefore do not entertain any apprehension of the kind," replied Agatha "I am only sorry that she obtained the myrtle from me by her hypocritical cant and ridiculous prophecies."

"Why, Miss Singleton, I never heard you so anxious about a trifle before !" rejoined Olive ; "for what is there in a bit of trimmery myrtle to make such a piece of work about ? but, now I think of it, where did you get it Miss Singleton ? perhaps you got it off the tree that somebody placed under your chamber window ; but as you cannot tell who it was, I should not care so much about the giver."

Agatha, daring this rude speech of the envious and inquisitive Olive, had betrayed no small symptoms of embarrassment ; the more as the eyes of Margaret Craftily were fixed on her with an expression of evident astonishment ; yet, willing to encourage the idea of Olive, that she had taken the branch from the myrtle-tree, and to avoid all further rude interrogatories on the subject, she endeavored to collect herself, and assuming an air of careless indifference replied,—

"Neither the myrtle-tree, nor the giver of it, whoever he may be, is, I assure you, of the slightest consequence ; yet I do not see why I should have parted even with such a trifle, merely to gratify the whims of a foolish old woman who chose to demand it, because she happened to chatter a parcel of idle and unmeaning jargon ; however, it is scarce worth mentioning or thinking of again."

This speech, apparently so carelessly given, completely silenced all further conversation on the subject, and other topics were canvassed of a far more interesting nature to some of the party, and that was the expected return of Leontine Craftily from the herring fishery : and Margaret expressing her fears that her brother had not met with the success he had done on his former voyage, and that some unexpected incident had detained him on the coast, Olive exclaimed,—

"Margaret, don't vapour one to death with your dismal fears! I protest you make one quite melancholy; I dare say that Leo is quite safe; for if any thing had happened very particular to him, you would not have been the first to have been informed of it, I can assure you."

"Indeed, Miss Olive Blust, that is taking upon you to say a great deal," replied Margaret somewhat tartly; I do not know who has a better right than his own sister to hear of his concerns; but it is all very well, Miss Olive—it is all very well," repeated Margaret, with additional asperity; "Leo, perhaps, has found a more able counsellor, and a more warmly attached friend than Margaret Craftly, in whose bosom he may choose to repose his confidential affairs; but I am well persuaded that he never will find a more sincere or a less self-interested one."

"Well, you need not be so snappish about it, Miss Margaret," cried Olive, "Leo has a right to do what he pleases, without asking your leave, I suppose; you cannot expect him to be tied to your apron-strings now he is a man, Miss Margaret; and if he has a mind to be married, what's that to you I should be glad to know?"

The astonished, and now highly offended and insulted Margaret, looked at Olive as if doubting the evidence of her senses, and then at poor Jessy, as if there she could derive any intelligence, or an explanation of words so mysterious, for never had Olive spoken with such unparalleled effrontery of address and manner; but Jessy was profoundly silent, as well as Agatha, both of whom were shocked at the premeditated attack she had made on the feelings of her inoffensive and good-natured kinswoman, who, after a painful struggle in endeavouring to suppress her indignant emotions, of rising anger against this shameless girl, exclaimed,—

"Olive, I did not wish to make my brother's dwelling, and my own, a scene of contentious jarring, or to render your sister, and the amiable Miss Singleton, uncomfortable while they remain in it; you have afflicted me deeply, but really more on your own account than my own, that a daughter of my worthy kinsman's should have betrayed so much weakness of mind,—so much badness of heart! I will not flatter you, Olive; you have a bad

heart, foolish in your own conceit, and evil-minded to every body else. Had your poor mother been this day living, she would have been sorely grieved for thy sake, child : for there was not a better kind-hearted woman in existence than poor Jessy ! But I have done with thee, Olive Blust ; I have done with thee, child ; e'en take thy own blind, foolish and perverse ways, and do as thou wilt ; thou wilt one day bring a sorrowful heart to repentance, and mayhap the grey hairs of thy fond old father to"—Margaret stopt,—looked a moment at the tearful eyes of the trembling, gentle Jessy, and breathed out the remainder of the sentence in a heartfelt sigh.

Meanwhile, Olive had sunk into a sullen and obstinate silence, and seemed neither affected by the emotions of her kinswoman, or moved by the tears of her gentle sister.

And Agatha, shocked at this insensibility, as well as the depravity of her unnatural and unfeeling disposition ; and imagining that the sooner this discussion was put an end to the better, by quitting Margaret's residence as soon as possible, proposed to Jessy that they should immediately return to Herring Dale ; alleging to Miss Craftly, as a reason for her hasty departure, the promise given to the fisher, to be home to supper :—" On which condition, you will excuse our remaining longer, I know, my dear Miss Craftly," uttered Agatha, with her accustomed sweetness, and rising to put on her scarf.

" Oh, my dear ! don't apologise to me for only doing what you consider to be your duty," cried Margaret, surveying the calm, placid, and lovely features of Agatha with unspeakable satisfaction, " which you are a young lady too sensible of propriety, good sense, and delicacy, ever to lose sight of : and I hope your next visit to me, my dear Miss Singleton, will be one of a more agreeable nature than that you have witnessed this evening."

Perhaps this speech was uttered with more warmth than she intended, for it immediately crimsoned the cheeks of the indignant Olive ; who, whisking her bonnet over her ears, did not so much relax from her ill-humour as to return the " good night" which, when they were ready to depart, was pronounced by Margaret in a tone of greater kindness than could be expected, after the treatment.

ment she had received, or that her petulant and unforgiving young kinswoman merited at her hands. But the affectionate Jessy amply atoned for the want of feeling in her sister, by doubling her attention to Margaret when she bade her farewell, and hoping that it would not be long before she paid them a visit at Herring Dale; to which Margaret coldly replied,—

“That, child, will depend upon circumstances, time, place, and season; there is a time and season for all things, you know, Jessy; but I shall always be happy to see you and Miss Singleton: so Heaven be with you till we meet again!”

Olive had taken her usual flight, according to her whimsical disposition, and had walked with rapid strides to a considerable distance before either Agatha or Jessy could reach her; old Nicholas following close at their heels, whom Margaret had appointed for their guardian, to see them safe home.

“Olive, how can you think that Miss Singleton or I can at all keep pace with you, if you continue walking on at that rate? pray give us leave to breathe a moment at the foot of this hill.”—

To which Olive suddenly replied, and relaxing in her pace only while she uttered,—

“And why are not you and Miss Singleton able to walk as fast as me, pray; you are prodigiously delicate all of a sudden, Miss Jessy:—but I suppose you have taken a lesson out of somebody’s book that shall be nameless, and want to set yourself up for a fine lady. Never the more I shan’t wait while you choose to stay here cooling your heels at the bottom of the hill, I assure you. Father will wonder where the dickens we have got to all this while.”

“Your rudeness, Miss Blust, is actually intolerable,” cried Agatha, obliged to sit down to recover her breath, having walked so rapidly; “and though it is too contemptible for me to take any serious offence at it, yet I would advise you to repress it, lest it might lead to some unpleasant altercation with one who will not tamely suffer you to insult me with impunity. He is your protector; but remember, that he is mine also. He will shield me from the unmerited attacks of malevolence and ill-natured sarcasm, although exercised on me by you.”

“I only spoke to Jessy,” cried Olive, now somewhat abashed

My rebuke so unexpected from the mild and gentle Agatha; "I'm sure I never so much as mentioned your name but once, and then it was only in joke."

"True," retorted Agatha, "I am always a nameless body with you, Miss Blust, but I am not at a loss to guess where your allusions point; you do not repeat my name indeed, but remember, that the dagger generally strikes deepest when aimed in the dark."

Old Nicholas now stood at a humble distance, but found it necessary to remind them that the hour was growing late, and night advanced apace.

"For my own part, I care not a jot how late it may be, young ladies," said he, "but there has been a grand dinner and hunting party to-day up at Lord Winstone's, and mayhap some of the gay sparks may be journeying homeward, with more wine in their heads than they have discretion in their hearts; and falling in with three such handsome young ladies, there's no knowing what they might say to you; I would defend you while I had a drop of blood left in my old veins; but Lord love you! I should be no more than a rat in the way of such ranting blades."

Agatha and Jessy grew fearfully alarmed at this unexpected piece of intelligence of the old man's; while Olive laughed immoderately at the idea of encountering them before they reached Herring Dale, and was now as slow in her movements as she had been rapid in them before, stopping one moment on pretence of tying her bonnet, and the next to adjust her scarf, to the great annoyance of her sister and Agatha, who in vain besought her to reflect on the probability of their meeting with some of the inebriated huntsmen; on which she exclaimed, "Danger of a fiddle-de-dee! what harm could they do to us, when we are so near father's; and then what a bit of fun we should have, if they should offer to see us home. Father would look so funny, and Sam Russel so fierce, that I protest I should be ready to die with laughter."

"Well Miss, if ever I heard the like of you," cried Nicholas; "I should not much relish such sport, if I was a prudent sort of a body, I assure you."

"Oh my heavens, Olive! how can you talk in this manner before Nicholas," said Jessy, softly whispering in the ear of her sis-

ter, "I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself; what must he think of you?"

"'Tis very plain what he thinks of her," said Agatha, increasing her pace, and uttering this in as soft a whisper, as she linked her arm in that of Jessy's, intreating her to walk with as much speed as she possibly could. But Nicholas, who at this moment had proceeded a few paces before them, suddenly called out for them to stop.

"For may I never smoke tobacco, ladies," uttered he, "if there be 'ant a parcel of huntamen just galloping down the hill at full speed! if you stand still a bit here, belike they'll not see you, and pass by; but if they chance to catch but a glimpse of your petticoats, the devil an inch they move afterwards."

Agatha and Jessy instinctively obeyed the voice of their conductor; but Olive, whether by accident or design we will leave the reader to guess, happened to slip her scarf loose from the shoulders, and it dropped on the ground just as the huntmen appeared in view; and two of them instantly stopped their horses, taking a full gaze at the disrobed Olive, but a fuller gaze at the trembling and now dreadfully alarmed Agatha, one of them exclaiming to the other, "Halt, Cleveland! by Heaven! there is the same lovely creature that we saw at Adams's Library! Fair game, by all that's beautiful!"

"And the pretty little girl we saw with her," uttered his companion in the same licentious tone and manner: "I'll attack her—you the beauty!"

"Indeed, gentlemen," cried Nicholas, advancing, with his oak-stick toward them, "but I suppose you will attack neither, when you know who these young ladies are, and belong to: and if you do not, I do again suppose, that seeing they are females, it would not become you to attack them in any sort of ungentlemanly manner."

"Confound your suppositions, you old Quizby, and are you their protector?" cried the younger of the huntmen, in a taunting sarcastic accent, and jumping off his horse at the same instant.

"No, my Lord," uttered Nicholas, "I trust they have better protection than a poor old man, who can do naught to serve them;

but I pray that Heaven will protect them. And what have they to fear, when such high-titled gentlemen as you appear before them? two peers of the British realm, I am very sure, would never disgrace their titles by offering an insult to unprotected females."

"There my old boy you have us," cried the elder; "but how the devil came you to scent us out so cleverly as being peers of the realm, eh?"

"What," cried Nicholas, "is my Lord Winstone and Lord George Cleveland so little known in this neighbourhood as not to be distinguished whenever they are seen; if you have wine in your heads, my Lords, you have honour in your hearts. I pray you to use it in your conduct toward these young ladies that you see before you."

"Curse your preaching! you had better let it alone, unless you can teach us the practice as well as the theory, you old Snap-dragon," cried the younger, who appeared to be most under the influence of the intoxicating libations he had offered that day at the shrine of Bacchus. "What the devil! when you tempt us with such bewitching fruit, are we not to taste of it?" And seizing Olive round the waist, he snatched a kiss from her glowing lips.

Meanwhile, the elder dismounting from his horse, at the same instant approached Agatha and Jessy, though in a less licentious manner, and requested the favour of a similar salutation; but he was haughtily repulsed by the indignant manner of our heroine, who, pushing him back, exclaimed,—

"Forbear, my Lord! if indeed you are a Lord, and a gentleman, (and the one ought not to be separable from the other,) from insulting those who will not suffer it with impunity; you are mistaken in your objects; nor is the situation in which you now appear an excuse for your unwarrantable attack on defenceless females returning to their home, where they will shortly find protection under the roof of a father and a friend, and an avenger of your ungentlemanly conduct. Permit us quietly to pursue our path homeward;—prevent us, and it is neither your high rank or title that will screen you from exposure and punishment."

"By all the gods and goddesses, you are an angel, whatever earthly name you bear!" cried Lord Winstone: "tell me that name, and I am gone this instant."

"And the lovely ones who are with you, thou celestial!" uttered Lord George Cleveland, "and we will vanish this moment."

The blood of Agatha now mounted to her cheeks, and casting a look which utterly awed and repelled the advances of the bold inquirers, she indignantly exclaimed,—

"On no other condition should I deem it necessary to gratify a curiosity which I consider on the present occasion to be impertinent, and offensive to female delicacy; but the name I bear, is Agatha Singleton."

"A charming name by all that's heavenly!" exclaimed Lord George, turning to his friend, who appeared struck with evident surprise and confusion: "Winstone, here's a discovery! Montague's Cottage Venus without a shadow of doubt! And the young ladies who are with you, madam?"

"The Misses Blust!" cried our heroine, in the same indignant tone, "the two daughters of the Fisher Blust, of Herring Dale, to which we were journeying, had not your ungentlemanly interruption so rudely and unnecessarily delayed us."

"That intelligence sufficeth," uttered Lord George: "Bob, we must pair off; we have hit a wrong mark. Peter will shoot us, and these lovely creatures will stand in evidence against us to sign our warrant for execution. Come, why the devil don't you mount your Rosinante! Knight of the Woful, why don't you depart! here's no Dulcinea for either you or I,—so the sooner we make our exit the better."

"Not till I obtain one favour of this heavenly creature!" exclaimed Lord Winstone, approaching Agatha with the most respectful deference,—“her pardon and forgiveness for the unlucky incident of this evening."

To which Agatha in a milder manner replied,—

"That will be readily granted to you, my Lord, on the instant departure of you and your friend."

"Implicitly, Madam, I obey your commands," uttered Lord

Winstone, bowing gracefully, and mounting his horse at the same moment.

Meanwhile, his more lively companion turned round to Olive and exclaimed,—

“I, too, loveliest, am bound to offer some apology here at the foot-stool of Beauty; and though no dragon guards the Hesperian fruit from the rude touch of the invader, yet I would not willingly transgress the boundaries of discretion, or harm its sacred repose; will you therefore, Miss Blust, kindly pardon a rattle-brained fellow for his offences here, when he candidly confesses that he has been this day offering more sacrifices to the merry god Bacchus, than to the shrine of Beauty. Those roseate lips were never formed for anger; tell me that you forgive me, and I shall ride on the wings of my flying Pegasus with double speed.”

“Oh! dear, my Lord!” cried the vain and gratified Olive, “you may fly away then as fast as you like, for you have not offended me in the least degree, I assure you. I am not so nice as some folks are about such trifles.”

“But would you were as wise!” softly ejaculated Lord Winstone, resting his eyes for a moment on the modest and beautiful countenance of Agatha, whose lovely cheeks were now suffused with blushes at the impropriety of Olive’s speech to one who had already confessed that he was in a state of inebriety; and Lord Winstone perceiving that the embarrassment she betrayed, and the confusion of the timid Jessy, as fearing the intemperance of his young friend, impatiently exclaimed,—

“Come, Cleveland! let us now depart, and leave these ladies quietly to pursue their walk, which we have so indecorously interrupted. Miss Singleton, I have the honour once more of bidding you farewell.”

Agatha curtsied, but responded no farewell to that which Lord Winstone had addressed to her in particular: in short, his Lordship’s looks were particular, and on that very account she was desirous that her own should decidedly repress them, and give him no chance of looking at her again in the same like manner.

Lord George Cleveland had now mounted; and nodding to his friend, and once more bowing to the confident Olive, in a manner

that any other female would have discouraged, galloped off at full speed, Lord Winstone following at a more moderate pace; and no sooner were they completely out of sight, than Agatha piously ejaculated,—

“Thank Heaven, they are gone at last! Now let us hasten home immediately; there is not a moment to be lost; there may be more huntsmen on the road yet; pray let us endeavour by every possible means to avoid them. We may not again escape insult.”

“Nor would have escaped it now, I do verily believe, Miss, if it had not been for your very becoming spirit and modesty of behaviour,” observed Nicholas, as they hastened on; “for both their Lordships had been tasting pretty freely of the juice of the grape, or they would not have talked so much about the gods and the goddesses, and the like of that, which I consider to be a most abominable thing, and quite heathenish, as a body may say, seeing as we have but one God that rules over us all; but, lack-a-day! the world is turned topsy-turvy, that’s for certain, or there would not be such rantipoley people in it, that want to turn our blessed Christian religion into all manner of ways, on purpose that they may find an excuse for their perverse, blind, and foolish vagaries: but never the more will the good man stray; if he is honest and wise, he will always keep in the right path, be it ever so rugged, because it is the surest. Not that I mean to disparage the young men because they are a little merry: no, no, they are gentlemen of good report in this neighbourhood, and do a mint of good to the poor, and are well beloved by their tenants too. Lord George is a little rickety or so to be sure, and loves the lassies more than he loves his money, for he parts with it as freely as a prince; and so does Lord Winstone, but he is quite another guess sort of a man to Lord George Cleveland. He has been on his travels all through outlandish countries, and is looked upon to be one of the most learned gentlemen down in these parts. He has a fine estate too, and will have more riches than he will know what to do with, when he is married to the young lady he is paying his addresses to.”

“And who may that be, pray, Nicholas?” demanded Agatha, &

who was glad to find that they were now in sight of the habitation of the fisher.

"Ah! do pray let us know who such a sweet young man is going to be married to," cried Olive, in the most curious and impatient manner.

To which the old man instantly replied, "To the daughter of the Most Noble the Marquis of Montault, Miss."

"Oh my gracious! to the beautiful Lady Lavinia," cried Olive; "and she is sister to Lord Montault, one of the prettiest, delight-fullest young fellows in existence; and dear me! I wonder who he will marry,—some grand princess, I dare say; for he is the only son that the Marquis has got, and will roll in riches when his father dies, and be a marquis too into the bargain."

How it happened, that the very unexpected mention of Lord Montague's name should crimson the cheeks of our lovely heroine with a roseate blush bright as the tints of morn, we cannot divine; 'tis a mystery of Love's own manufacturing, and they must be cunning indeed who can solve it!

The shades of the evening, however, kindly threw a veil over those beautiful blushes, and hid them from the prying eyes of observation; but they could not veil them from the too conscious bosom of Agatha, which gently heaved with a sensation of half pain half pleasure,—a strange combination of feelings hard to be described, and never felt before, as the sentence which had escaped from the lips of Lord George Cleveland recurred to her memory, and passed in a sort of fleeting succession across her mind;—'that Agatha Singleton was the cottage Venus of Lord Montault.'

Was she angry, or was she pleased, at this flattering epithet bestowed on her? This was the point in question; and something very like a blush again pervaded her lovely features. But what of that—it was not seen; so it was only 'young Love among the roses;' and who would not envy the sly urchin for having formed so delicious a retreat?

But our heroine fortunately possessed pride as well as sensibility, and we believe that at the present moment the former was the most predominant sensation towards Lord Montague; it was

evident, then, that he had been speaking of her to these young noblemen, for her name was already familiar to their ears. But in what terms had his Lordship spoken of her,—a cottage Venus; perhaps in idle sport he had so styled her; and she thought the term was too insignificant, and too hackneyed, for her to feel pleased with the compliment:—but Agatha forgot that it was only Lord George Cleveland who had called her by that name, and not Lord Montague; why then should she be so hasty in her conclusions, or unjust toward one of whom she had formed no unpleasing impression!

Meanwhile, Nicholas had replied to Olive's observations in the following manner,—

"Ah, Miss! but if you knew Lord Montague as well as I do, you would find that he does not place his happiness in riches, nor grandeur, nor fine clothes. Lord love you! he thinks no more of them than I do. He is as humble as a bee, and does not mind who he talks to, if they be ever so poor, as long as he knows they be honest: there is not the fellow of him in all the country round, both far and near: he is his father's own child for that all the world over. A better man never saw the light than the Marquis of Montault!—but as for the Marchioness—she is a fine, handsome woman, but I will say no more,—handsome is as handsome does, as the saying is."

"Oh! she is a prodigious fine woman to my mind," cried Olive Blust; "and Lady Lavinia is a fine woman too, with an elegant figure; she is almost as tall as me, but not quite; much about my size; don't you think so Nicholas?"

To which he replied!

"Why, to say truth, Miss, I have never seen but little of the young lady, and that little did not please me, so I wout tell a fib about the matter; she is too proud and scornful for poor folks to have any thing to do with; but lack-a-day! all flesh is grass; she may lay low enough one of these days; Mr. Death is a very uncivil sort of a gentleman; he don't stand upon much ceremony, when he has a mind to pay us a bit of a visit, and it is no use to tell him we are not at home; he wout call again to-morrow, I warrant him."

By this time they had arrived at Herring Dale, Olive's ill-humour having entirely vanished since she had received a salutation from a young Lord, whom her vanity suggested she had captivated with the charms of her person, and this circumstance was not forgot, in relating the incident of the evening to her father and Sam Russel; but the outlines of the adventure they had met with had already been drawn by a far more skilful hand; and when Agatha actually informed her protector that their Lordships had made the handsomest apologies that could be offered by gentlemen in their situation for the offence they had committed, the fisher's indignation against them was completely appeased, and he answered,—

“Well, well, my dear, if that be the case, I shall say nothing about the matter; a man in liquor can do more than make an apology, though his pocket sometimes pays for it too at the same time, when he plays the fool and the drunkard together; but if they had been sober, and had dared to insult you, or one of my children, shiver my topsails! but I would have twisted a yarn about their necks, whether they were lords or commoners. I would soon let them know what stuff Peter Blust is made of.”

“And I,” cried Sam, his eyes glistening with all the bright enthusiasm of youthful ardour, “would have blown any rascal's brains out who dared to have offered harm to”——Sam coloured deeply, for he had fixed his eyes full on Agatha; and added afterwards in a less energetic tone,—“to either of you.”

To which our heroine immediately replied,—

“Heaven forbid, Sir, that you, or any other man, should proceed to such violent measures on my account! such incautious haste, before you were acquainted with the nature of the offence, I should deem highly reprehensible, instead of being praiseworthy.” And this being all the thanks that poor Sam received for his gallantry, he coloured deeply, bit his lips, and continued profoundly silent during the remainder of the evening.

CHAPTER XIX.

" Though nature awhile in our breasts may awaken
Emotions with awe and with rev'rence replete,
Yet these will by tenderness often be shaken,
And never withstand aught that's touching or sweet ;
And hence the soft sigh of affectionate sorrow,
And hence the big tear in that soul-beaming eye ;
That eye, whence the diamond new lustre might borrow,
Whose brightness outshone every star in the sky."

At the departure of Sam Russel a silence of some minutes ensued, the poor fellow having actually quitted the house of the fisher with a heart too full for his tongue to find utterance ; the cold and formal ' good night,' of Agatha Singleton being a complete extinguisher on his hopes of ever succeeding to gain a place in her affections : and although he obtained a promise from the Fisher Blust, that he would use his interest in his behalf with his lovely adopted, yet there was a silent dignity in the manner of Agatha toward him on this evening, so utterly repulsive to all the fond hopes of an impassioned lover, and the warm and romantic notions he had formed of addressing her on the subject of his passion, that he despaired even of any kind of intercession which would be made on the part of her protector, to move a heart so cold and insensible to the tender and idolized passion with which his was glowing for her. But Agatha was not so insensible as he imagined ; she beheld with deep regret the strong though hopeless attachment which this young man was inspired with, but felt that it was utterly out of her power ever to return it ; she therefore thought it a duty which she owed to herself and to him, to disdain the petty arts of coquetry and vanity, by plainly adopting one decisive line of conduct consistent with candour and sincerity, that he might at once be able to form a conclusive opinion of her sentiments toward him, and spare her the pain of giving a direct refusal of his addresses. But whether the fisher had promised Sam more than he was able to perform, or that he thought Aga-

tha unnecessarily severe towards her disconsolate lover, we cannot pretend to decide, for an expression of some displeasure passed suddenly over his countenance, as Sam, in a tone of the most abject despondency, bade him farewell : and immediatly replenishing his pipe, and puffing away a sort of half angry and impatient sigh, he exclaimed to Jessy, who sat near him, but without directing one glance toward Agatha,—

“ Jess thee hast a soft heart, dost not pity him, wench ? ”

Jessy artlessly replied, “ Pity who, father ? ”

This was certainly one way to make matters worse ; and poor Jessy trembled when her father somewhat angrily pronounced,—

“ Shiver my top-sails ! why who dost think I meant but poor honest, quiet Sam, who, though he is nothing but a fisher, carries as warm a heart in his breast as some great folks carry scorn in their countenance. Poor Sam ! I do pity him with every vein of my heart’s blood : ’tis desperate hard to be in love ! I am sorry for poor Sam, and that be the truth of it. What say’st thou, Agatha Singleton ? ”

The eloquent blood of our lovely heroine had mounted to her fair cheeks, even at the commencement of this singular and extraordinary speech of her protector ; but now it glowed with brighter and warmer hues, and the dignified demeanour which was always a striking feature in the character of Agatha, now shone conspicuously on the occasion, and without once losing sight of the ties of gratitude, which so strongly bound her to the fisher, she gravely answered,—

“ Thus called upon, Sir, you compel me to answer you on a subject which I plainly perceive it is no longer possible for me to avoid. I have heard your sentiments upon it : will you now have the goodness to hear mine ; and I will then allow you to be a judge of the nature of my feelings with respect to the object in question ; but surely you will not condemn me unheard.—I wait your decision, Sir ; will you be pleased to listen to me or not ? ”

The manner of Agatha,—so calm, so dignified, and yet so firm, confounded, surprised, and for a moment perfectly pozed her protector : but instantly resuming his wonted tone of kindness to her, he replied,—

"Listen, to you, my dear girl: shiver my top-sails! when has there ever been a time that I have not listened to you? Don't I always listen to you with pleasure?"

Agatha answered mildly, "Perhaps, Sir, that may be doubtful at the present moment; nevertheless, I cannot depart from the language of truth and sincerity, which from earliest infancy I have been taught to hold sacred. You appear to wish, Sir, that I should form a more favourable opinion of the merits of Mr. Sam Russel, than has been evident from my conduct toward him this evening."

"Why yes, my dear, I do somehow wish that poor Sam had been a bit of a sweetheart of yours, if you had a mind to him," cried the fisher, "seeing as he has fallen desperately in love with you, and would marry you to-morrow, without a brass farthing in the world, if you would but fancy him; but if you cannot, why there's an end of the matter altogether."

"Yes, Sir," cried Agatha, deeply colouring, "there is certainly a decided end to any expectation of that kind, Sir, it is not that I wish to insinuate that I consider myself superior in merit, or above the station of Mr. Russel, or that I do not feel obliged to him for the favourable sentiments he has entertained toward me, but I have really no inclination at present to enter into the matrimonial state; and if I had—it—would not be on Mr. Russel that I would bestow my hand. I will never give my hand where I cannot give my heart; my dear father, had he been living, would in this respect have left me free. I am still free; and will not be importuned again on this subject."

"No, shiver my top-sails! if you shall;" exclaimed the fisher, puffing away a cloud of smoke at the same moment, "and I will tell Sam so when he calls to-morrow."

"Do so, Sir," cried Agatha, "and you will oblige me, as well as spare me the disagreeable necessity of telling him so myself."

So saying, our heroine respectfully bidding the fisher good night, immediately retired to her chamber, glad to obtain a few moments for reflection, and to be relieved from pursuing a conversation, which had considerably oppressed her feelings: for, never since she had been under the roof of the fisher, had she felt so severely

the loss of her beloved father, or that she was really an orphan; supported by the bounty of a benevolent stranger, who, kind and good-hearted as he was, to serve the interest of his young friend, had on this occasion stretched a point beyond the boundaries of friendship and delicacy; for certainly Agatha felt that he had no right to stand between her and her own heart, in the disposal of which she was the free agent, and would be so while she remained mistress of her own actions. If any thing could have operated on her feelings the more strongly to reject the addresses of the young fisher, it was this very conduct of her protector; for Agatha with joy and gratitude reflected, that though she had been afflicted with many severe and heavy trials, Providence had not left her wholly destitute on the bounty of Fisher Blust. She had still a dwelling that she could call her own, and still the means left in her power to discharge the obligations she was under to him by the sale of the valuable jewels of which she was fortunately possessed! for never had she forgotten the words of her father, when a few days was before she separated from him for ever, he deposited them into her hands, as the means of support if ever she required it. These were certainly not the gift of her father, but probably had been the property of her mother; he had never told her so it was true, and had forbade her to importune him on the subject, and she had implicitly followed his commands; but Agatha conjectured that these jewels must have belonged to her mother, for who but a mother would have felt so deeply and tenderly concerned in her fate! It seemed that the fear of her wanting the means of support had been the strongest motive of her receiving so valuable treasure, and that her father (Captain Singleton) had been expressly enjoined by that dear and tender relative to tell her so; or why had he so particularly dwelt on the wishes of the generous donor of so liberal a gift.

Agatha profoundly felt the pleasure arising from being independent of the ties of obligation, whenever necessity should require it. What is more painful and agonizing to a feeling heart, than the galling sense of obligation to our fellow-beings. Alas! how frequently are we reminded of it, and how bitterly are we all obliged to carry the burden which we cannot shake off. The dearest

friends if reduced to the necessity, will sometimes give us occasion to remember in what manner they have benefitted us ; and an obligation to those for whom we cannot feel esteem or respect, is rendered still more insupportable ; for, they will never fail to choose a season to reproach us with it, when they are conscious it is utterly out of our power to return it, it is then the only channel through which they can strike the barbed arrow to our hearts, and we cannot strike again !

Not that this was exactly a case in point with Agatha and the fisher. She was well aware of the noble and distinguishing traits of his character and disposition, and of the pure and benevolent motives which had induced him to offer her an asylum beneath his roof : he had protected her as a father, and expected no other reward from her than the smile of an approving conscience, for the performance of a virtuous action. Nay, it was even probable that from his undeviating kindness toward her, that he already regarded her in the light of one of his own children ; but was he to expect any sacrifice of her affections on this account, or that she should marry a man she did not love, merely to testify her gratitude toward him !—and if he did expect this, her gratitude to him was nothing ; for it would be purchased at too dear a price, when the happiness or the misery of her existence would ever after be dependent on it.

Our heroine felt that she would much sooner part with all that she possessed, and repay the obligation she was under to the Fisher Blust, than be so constrained to act in opposition to her own feelings ; sooner toil for her daily meals, than wed a man for whom she felt a total indifference. How long she would have indulged in these reflections, or whether she would not have passed the remainder of the night in resolving and re-resolving on the same, we cannot tell, had not the sharp shrill voice of Claribelle completely awakened her, by exclaiming,—

“ I protest and vow, Miss Agatha, there is something bewitches this house, and that is the truth of it. I only opened the window a moment to let in a bit of fresh air, and what should I see but an old woman, that looked like a fortune-telling gypsy, only that I believe she is more of a witch ; for when I asked her what she

wanted, she answered in a grumbling tone, 'not you;' and threw this paper in at the window, before I had time to shut it down, and then vanished out of sight as quick as lightning."

"And why did you not instantly fling the paper after her," cried Agatha, taking it out of the hand of her attendant: and yet the poor old creature is more deserving of our compassion than our anger, for it is plain that she is a maniac, and does not know whither she wanders; we met her this evening as we went to Miss Craftly's."

"So Miss Olive was telling me," cried Claribelle; "I protest I never once thought of that, or I should not have answered her so sharply; but I bade her begone, or I would soon send her a-packing; so she flung the paper directly in my face, and marched off in a huff. Pray heaven! that paper is not a charm to bewitch us with some evil spirit; I have heard of such things before, I assure you, Miss Agatha, and am mightily afraid of them: you had better not touch it."

The fear which now pervaded every feature of the alarmed Claribelle occasioned her lovely mistress to laugh heartily.

"I wonder, Claribelle, you can be so ridiculous," uttered she; "would to heaven that no evil might befall us but what this poor old wandering creature may threaten us with, and I should fearlessly encounter it! Come, let us see what the charm contains. Bring hither the candle, and I will examine it."

Claribelle obeyed, but took great precaution to stand at a respectful distance, holding out the candle at arm's-length, in the apprehension that the effects of the charm might operate on her before her mistress. But what was the astonishment of Agatha, on opening the paper, to find that it contained a sprig of myrtle similar to that which she had given to the gypsy, only that it appeared to be freshly gathered, for it still retained all its bloom and sweetness; and on the paper were written words to the following effect;—

"Where true love exists, it is to be found among the breathing sweets of heaven's own atmosphere; it is a flower that can never perish! It will bloom when the flowers of the forest are seen no more! It will spring up in the wilderness! and even barren

sands will not destroy its fragrance ; it is inhaled from heaven itself ;—and in two genial souls united by one faithful tie, it will survive even the wreck of nature ! wafting its last sigh on the loved bosom from whence it sprung ; and, like summer's rose, its beauties can never fade : when the roseate colour is fled, its fragrance still remains behind ! The fond memorial of its virtues never dies. But passion, base, corrupted, and fleeting as the wind,—that indeed is perishable ! and wherever it breathes its baneful influence, destruction is sure to follow. These, alas ! are only the colours, but not the sweets of the lovely blossom ; and soon it withers, and is no more remembered ! for the hand that mars its odours, ruthlessly consigns it to oblivion, or an early grave ! The emblem of the former be thine, sweet maid : but never may thy young heart become the victim of the latter : fear not to act uprightly, and let no one presume to stand between thee and thy chaste affections. The guardian of innocence and virtue will triumph over the evil spirit that would crush thee, were he able,—but he is withheld. There is a charm in goodness too potent for the wicked to overcome. Loveliest, farewell ! and when you fail in spirit, and are weary with trouble, think of a gypsy's prophecy, and you will be comforted."

Agatha, perfectly confounded at the contents of the paper, which was addressed to her in a hand unknown, (for it was not the handwriting of Lord Montague,) now felt convinced that the appearance and character of the gypsy was only an assumed one. She paused and re-perused the paper, before she attempted once to satisfy the curiosity of the impatient Claribelle ; who, having seen only the sprig of myrtle, immediately conjectured that it was accompanied with a love letter to her fair mistress, and exclaimed,—

"Well, to be sure ! what sly creatures these men are ; only to think of sending the old gypsy woman in that comical manner with that love letter to you, Miss Agatha. Lord ! there is no being a match for the tricks of men, after all. They will find a way to overcome us, do what one will to prevent it !"

"What are you talking about, Claribelle ?" said Agatha.

"Why, your sweet-heart, Miss, to be sure," answered she,

"that has sent you that long, and no doubt, that very pretty love letter."

"You are quite mistaken," replied our heroine, with a deep blush, "you are quite mistaken, Claribelle; this paper contains no love letter, I assure you."

"Then, pray, Miss Agatha, if I may be so bold as to ask, what is it all about?" said the inquisitive attendant.

To which Agatha somewhat sharply replied, "What you do not understand, and therefore the contents cannot possibly concern you one way or the other. I have once before hinted to you, Claribelle, that I will not be questioned on subjects that do not at all concern you: it is no love letter that I have received, nor do I know from whence this paper came, or who has written it; but it means no harm; let that intelligence quiet your fears of all evil spirits on my account, nor shall I ever fear any, while I repose my hopes in the bosom of Him who permits no injury to his creatures, when they look up to him for confidence and protection."

"Well, Miss, I know that," cried Claribelle, "but men will be wicked in their ways, in spite of all the religion in the world, and will do us harm, too, if they can. And you are very young, and very beautiful, Miss Agatha, and I was going to say without any offence,—but, perhaps, you will be angry, so—so—I had better hold my tongue."

"That, I believe, you will find to be a difficult matter to do," cried Agatha, half smiling, "so I will indulge you now in listening to what you were going to say, and without being offended,—Come, Claribelle, out with it."

"Why, Miss I protest I do not think it at all a very pretty thing, for a gentleman to be sending old gypsy women, at this time of night, with papers and bits of myrtle, and flinging them in at windows, to frighten one in this sort of way," uttered Claribelle, "and never so much as to think it worth his while to let you know who he is; 'tis a comical way of paying his addresses to such a young lady as you, I am sure,—and—and—if I was you, Miss Agatha, I should not take it quite so civilly, I promise you."

"And pray, how would you have me remedy it, supposing that

it is really offensive to my feelings?" cried Agatha, who could not but acknowledge the justness of the remark: "I have never seen the object from whom I receive these mysterious though trifling gifts, or I should decidedly put an end to such clandestine proceedings; but were I to throw this paper again out of the window, it might fall into some hands that would place some improper or false constructions on a matter so trifling; I therefore deem it more prudent to retain it in my possession, till by some chance or accident the writer may be revealed to me, either in person or by name."

Agatha had not altogether been ingenuous or sincere in giving this explanation of her feelings and motives for her conduct to her attendant, conscious that she had not, occasioned her to blush deeply! but it was an explanation every way so satisfactory to the feelings of Claribelle, and she felt so proud of the confidence which her beloved young mistress had now thought proper to repose in her, that neither the blush nor the sigh that followed it was observed by her curious and prying eye.

Agatha then retired to rest, but certainly was more disturbed by waking dreams than sleeping ones; for she no longer doubted that the personage who had assumed the form of the old gypsy was either an agent of Lord Montague, or Lord Montague himself; and that he should think it necessary to pursue such a system of conduct with respect to her, and assume such disguises for the purpose of revealing his sentiments to her, she conceived to be the very height of indelicacy and impropriety; as by this conduct, at once mysterious and clandestine, he was daily and hourly exposing her to the animadversions, and perhaps would shortly expose her to the censure, of a base and always ill-judging world; and how should she be able to resist such an attack, in her orphan state, with no protector, save only one, who would in such a case not feel disposed to stand forward in her defence; for the Fisher Blust had a strange mixture of contradiction in his character, sometimes softened even to effeminate weakness, and in the next moment guided only by the wild impetuosity of intemperate passion; for what is passion but intemperance, alas! more intoxicating than the fumes of the most spirituous liquors, and far more

baneful and destructive in its effects on the human frame: she had seen such effects on the disposition of her protector, though never shown to her, and she had always trembled at the consequences that it produced; for, after the conflicts of rage had subsided, the fisher was always reduced to a state of imbecile weakness, powerless as the infant; which disposition, added to his want of education, unfitted him for the task of even being the guardian of his own children, much less to be a mentor of those so highly gifted with accomplishments, natural and acquired, as was the mind of our lovely heroine; she could direct him, not he her; and in the present instance he had greatly lost sight of being the guardian of her happiness, in wishing her to espouse a man, without once considering whether he had obtained any influence over her affections; that she had at once frustrated every attempt to constrain her on a point in which her happiness was so materially concerned, she rejoiced because she was very certain that after this, the attempt to control or rather to fetter her inclinations, would never be made by him again. But with respect to Lord Montague, what could she do, if he still continued thus to address her in so mysterious a character? If she complained to her protector of such a proceeding against his Lordship, would not the complaint be instantly made to the Marchioness, and her son, as well as herself, be made the objects of reproach and jealousy? Alas, what unhappy quarrels might not such a discovery occasion in the family of the noble Marquis, to be informed that his only hope and heir had formed a romantic passion for a poor orphan girl, who had found an asylum under the roof of the Fisher Blust? And would it not be said that she had thrown out some lure to ensnare his Lordship's affections? Certainly every mark of reproach, ill-nature, and malevolence, would be directed toward her, both in the family of Lord Montague, and in that also of her protector; for what had she not already endured from the impertinence of Olive Blust? And what struggles had she not made to conceal her indignation of the conduct and disposition of this evil-minded girl, who had insulted her beyond the stretch sometimes of almost human forbearance? She had also an avowed enemy in the person of Leontine Craftily, for what cause she could not precisely tell,

but she was evidently the object of his aversion, perhaps, because owing to the influence he perceived she had acquired over the mind of Jessy, he considered her a drawback on his base and dishonourable views, on the gentle heart of that amiable girl; and perhaps, because he knew that she suspected him, that he naturally disliked her: but of this Agatha was certain, that she was both the object of Craftly's aversion and his jealousy, and that he would probably rather rejoice at any accident which might occasion her to fly from beneath the roof of her protector, than lament or sympathise in her sufferings; and was any altercation to take place with her and the fisher, that none but the gentle and tender-hearted Jessy would pity her misfortunes.

Thus circumstanced in the house, even of the man who had promised her his protection, and who doubtless would not withdraw it while her conduct, in his views, merited his approbation, yet her heart was by no means at ease with the repeated attacks of Lord Montague, for how could she doubt that it was not his Lordship who had continually addressed her, not certainly directly in the language of love, but something warmer than was generally attached to friendship? and that language too was ambiguous; it implied that she had a secret enemy, whose baneful influence was to crush her by some cruel and invidious means, but he did not mention who that secret enemy was. She could not conceive in what manner she had incurred the displeasure of so perfidious a foe; she had not, to her knowledge, injured mortal, but through the whole of her short and blameless life had endeavoured by every means in her power to do good to her fellow-creatures. Lost, therefore, in perplexity and painful doubt, Agatha passed nearly the whole of the night without sleep, and when she appeared at the breakfast table of the fisher, her pale countenance and disordered looks alarmed the fears of the whole family, not even Olive excepted, for she exclaimed, as soon as she beheld her,—

“My gracious, Miss Singleton, why what's the matter with you? I am sure something is, for you look all manner of colours this morning, blue, green, and yellow; I am sadly afraid you are going to be ill of a fever, and then we shall all catch it, every skin of us. Oh! dear, I am so terribly frightened, I would not catch a fever for all the world.”

"Dearest Agatha, you are certainly not well," uttered Jessy approaching our heroine, and taking her cold and trembling hand with an air of the most affectionate anxiety, "what can I get for you, my dear friend, that will in any degree relieve you?"

Agatha was much affected with the manner of the kind-hearted and amiable girl, and returning the affectionate pressure of her hand, replied,—

"Nothing, my dear Jessy; do not alarm yourself on my account, I do not feel ill, I assure you, but I have not slept well, and not having my usual rest, feel a little uncomfortable, that is all; I have no presage of approaching indisposition, believe me, do not thus alarm yourself."

"But we must alarm ourselves, Miss Singleton, and whether you like it or not, we must inquire what is the matter with you, that father may send for the doctor, to give you some physic," cried Olive, "for it would be quite shocking if we were all to catch your disorder, and die of it; but here comes father, and he will give you the best advice that is possible in your shocking condition."

At this moment the fisher entered the room, and perceiving something extraordinary in the looks of both his daughters, as well as an unusual agitation in the countenance of Agatha, he exclaimed,—

"Shiver my top-sails! what is the matter with you, lassies? Agatha, my dear, what ails you?"

"You must ask Olive, Sir," answered Agatha calmly, "for she appears to be a better judge of my feelings than I am myself; she is apprehensive that I have caught a contagious fever, since you beheld me last night, and that I shall endanger the health of your whole family, and therefore is desirous that you should instantly send for medical assistance, to prevent the impending mischief I am likely to bring down at Herring Dale."

Astonishment too great for utterance took possession of the features of the fisher; but only for an instant he permitted astonishment to dwell there, it was exchanged for a look of the most affectionate and anxious concern, for immediately approaching Agatha, and looking her full in the face, he uttered,—

"And are you really ill my dear girl, tell me for God's sake, are you really ill, Agatha Singleton?"

"Not that I know of, my dear Sir," answered Agatha half smiling.

The fisher instantly regarded his daughter with a look of the fiercest anger.

"You hussey," vociferated he, "you Jezabel, get out of my sight or I will knock you down with my tobacco pipe; you audacious rebel, how dare you think of frightening us all in this kind of manner? what did you mean by it, you impudent bold-faced jade? look how you have alarmed that dear girl, and frightened poor Jess out of her very senses. Get out of my sight, I say before I knock you down."

Both Agatha and Jessy now attempted to interfere, and to soften the incensed feelings of the fisher, but to no purpose; he persisted that if Olive did not immediately go out of the room, he would strike her; meanwhile the audacious girl provokingly exclaimed,—

"You may knock me down, if you please, but I will make you repent of it, if you do, I promise you; and you may beat your own children, on purpose to please Miss Singleton, but I will let her know that she shan't turn me out of doors, to let a beggar like her in; and you ought to be ashamed of yourself, father to encourage her to treat your own children, that you had by my mother, in this shameful manner."

No sooner had Olive uttered this, than she ran out from the presence of her father with the rapidity of lightning, not without some apprehensions that after this, the enraged father would put his intended threat into instant execution.

"For heaven's sake, I implore you to have patience with this wayward girl, Sir," exclaimed Agatha; "she knows not what she says, what she is doing; in a few minutes she will return to a sense of her duty and affection; on my knees I beg you not to be harsh with her."

"Oh! hear her, father, pray hear her!" cried Jessy, bursting into a flood of tears, which she could no longer restrain; "Olive has been much to blame, but at the intercession of Agatha Singleton, do not punish her with severity."

"By the eternal God, who has created me," cried the fisher, "I do not think that I shall ever bear to see her in my sight again, for she has been the torment of my existence ever since she was born; and yet I am her father; shiver my top-sails! that I ever was a father to such a termagant jade."

"Will you then refuse my most earnest supplications, Sir?" cried Agatha, greatly agitated at the increase of the violent passion which steeled every nerve of her protector; oh! let me not be a cause of dissension between a father and his child; rather let me quit your roof instantly, Sir, and no longer be a burden on your compassionate bounty. I have not offended, it is true,—but you know I am not so destitute as to seek an asylum where I am considered not welcome; instantly let me leave your house, but not without repaying you for the shelter you have afforded me; take all I have, it is at your disposal, but leave me free, and not exposed to this almost insupportable agony, of the reproaches of your own child. A beggar on your bounty! all but this I could have endured with patience, but this is not to be tolerated, and the daughter of Captain Singleton disdains any longer to suffer so unmerited a reproach."

CHAPTER XXII.

"Oh, power of guilt! how conscience can upbraid!
It forces us not only to reveal,
But to repeat what most we would conceal."

PERHAPS our lovely heroine, prompted alone by the native ingenuousness of her disposition, and the conscious rectitude of her principles, which were dictated by the purity of a mind and heart that had never yet been contaminated, by one unchaste thought, had occasioned her to speak with more warmth than she would have done, had she not been so bitterly galled by the reproaches and unmerited accusation which was preferred against her by Olive Blust. But Agatha Singleton could not forget that she was the daughter of a gentleman by birth, education, and manners;

and that though, by his decease, she was left an orphan, she still had the means of discharging any obligation which she had incurred beneath the roof of the fisher Blust, and still had a dwelling that she could claim as her own, if her circumstances and situation were such as to oblige her to resort to it: and she feared that the hour was nearly at hand, when she should feel under the necessity of applying to those resources which the never-failing goodness of the Almighty had not yet deprived her of; for the Cottage on the Cliff, though rented for the term of two years to her illustrious tenant, was still at her disposal after that time had expired, and in the intermediate space, she could take private lodgings in the house of some respectable person, who would accommodate her with the same, until such time as she could have possession of her own paternal dwelling. Why, then, should she suffer herself to be exposed to such unfeeling insults, and taxed with such unmerited accusations! and such accusations! to be thought guilty of so base a crime as that of alienating the affections of a father from his children, and those children females, like herself! Could she endure this in silence, and still patiently suffer so vile a reproach? and would not her further continuance beneath the roof of the Fisher Blust, give a colour to so foul a charge? But who else had accused her, besides the malicious and vindictive Olive? Certainly not the gentle kind-hearted Jessy, nor yet her benevolent protector: yet she had in plain and direct terms told him that she considered it necessary to quit the asylum he had so compassionately and so generously afforded to her in the time of her necessity and affliction, without reflecting what effect so sudden a resolution would produce on his feelings, already wounded and rendered irritable by the conduct of his unnatural child; and something like reproach assailed her heart, at having uttered words so hastily; for the fisher, after having looked at her for a moment in painful and agonizing silence, burst into a flood of tears, which he seemed to have now no power of restraining. "What!" exclaimed he, "leave me, Agatha Singleton; do I indeed hear you rightly? Shiver my top-sails! have I sheltered a young and tender nestling only to forsake the shelter these old fond arms had provided for her? I, Peter Blust, who have been

endeavouring to keep out every bitter storm, that might assail thee in the hour of danger,—I, who have cherished thee as my own, and warmed thee in my old heart, as the dearest thing about it, save my Jessy; and now thou would'st leave me, because a fool of a mad-cap wench has angered thee a little. Agatha Singleton, had thy poor father, the captain, been living, he would have thought this rough usage for one that has loved you so dearly as poor old Peter. He would have chided you for it, I know he would, for he was a good and just man; and perhaps I might chide you too; but when I look at you, curse me if I can say a word, and that's the truth of it; but I am very angry with you, Agatha Singleton; shiver my top-sails, I could blow a gale of wind that would send Herring Dale to Davy's locker in an instant! Jess, give me a glass of brandy. I must wish Agatha Singleton a safe journey wherever she is going; and the worst wish of old Peter is, that her voyage may be far happier over the other side of the water, than the keen blowing winds that wafted her to the coast of Cromer! Why dost not bring me the brandy, wench, when I bid thee?

Jessy was about to obey the command of her father, but the imploring and beseeching look she gave to our now really agitated and distressed heroine, was not without its influence on her throbbing heart; and instantly approaching the side of her protector, she exclaimed,—

“Hold, Sir! add not to my present sufferings, by resorting to the only means which will utterly deprive me of the consolation of justifying myself, in your good opinion, and you of the power of hearing me with patience: hear me first, and drink your brandy afterwards. By these tears! drawn from my eyes by your cruel reproaches, hear your ever grateful, your truly devoted Agatha Singleton, before you so harshly condemn her.”

“Well, well, I won't drink the brandy, if you will wipe away the dew drops from those pretty twinklers,” cried the fisher, instantly resuming the natural tone of his manner toward her; “shiver my top-sails! if I would cause you to shed a tear to save a fifty gun ship from sinking, when every body was out of her; mind that though: now what hast thou got to say for thyself, and for what art thou going to leave me?”

"Surely, Sir, you have strongly misconstrued my meaning, if you conceived for a moment I had intentionally uttered any thing to occasion you uneasiness," cried Agatha, with the most placid sweetness; "I only meant to give you comfort, to be a peace-maker in your family, and not a peace-breaker; Heaven forbid! But think you, Sir, I can tamely bear the insults to which I am hourly exposed beneath your roof, by being accused as the author of bringing down disgrace and ruin on your house by your having afforded me a shelter in it. Can I hear myself so unjustly reproached, without attempting once to oppose it, or seek to be acquitted of so false and bitter an aspersion on my morals as well as disposition; and what are the most proper means I should take to do this, but by ridding you of the presence of an object so hateful and obnoxious to your dearest ties and connexions? what alternative have I left for restoring peace to your so highly offended child, but by being no longer a burden on your bounty. And think you for a moment that I could adopt such an alternative without doing violence to my own feelings? think you, that I should depart from your dwelling without feeling agony the most insupportable, from a consciousness of your fatherly goodness and benevolence toward me; or that your humanity for a helpless orphan, would not demand my eternal gratitude and boundless thanks? think you that it is not interwoven with every remaining hour of my existence, or that I shall ever cease to regard you with the affection and duty of a child? No, Sir, believe me not so base a wretch; I trust I have profited by the precepts and example set before me by the best of fathers, whose memory I have never yet disgraced, and whose principles I have invariably followed. I spoke with warmth, but I uttered truth: I cannot deviate from it. I cannot endure, I cannot tolerate the incessant accusations and reproaches of your daughter, and forget the station in which I was born and educated. Still I would not have you punish her with severity on my account; she will be sufficiently so, when she is conscious of having offended in her duty, and wounded the affection of a tender and indulgent father. What shall I say more. Sir, to justify my conduct to you? I was led, nay irresistibly impelled by the purest motives to address

to you the language of candour and sincerity, not to displease, but to convince you, that no other motives but those which I have urged should have forced a wish to quit the roof of so benevolent and generous a friend. But, for your sake, and Jessy, the sister of my heart, I will yet endure with patience and fortitude, the unpleasantness to which I am exposed under your roof. Do therefore with me what you please, on this condition only, that I will remain with you as long as you receive payment for the maintenance of myself and my attendant Claribelle. I must insist on your accepting these conditions, as the only means by which I shall be induced to continue at Herring Dale for the future. I need not say that those means are still within my power, and that you know they are so ; they are in your possession ; use them for the purpose ; and, in the presence of your daughter, proclaim that Agatha Singleton did not enter your house as the child of your bounty. I respect, I revere you, Sir ; but I cannot, I will not submit to further obligation. For Jessy I would do much. Alas ! gentle girl, for her sake I have perhaps borne the continued insults of her wayward and indignant sister. Jessy ! perhaps for thy sake I am now enduring the slanderous reports of some malicious and evil-minded foe,—(ah ! why should I disguise my words, when thy happiness, thy honour, has been at stake,) the slanderous and malicious insinuations of thy kinsman, Leontine Craftly.”

“ Of Leontine Craftly !” exclaimed the fisher, casting on Jessy a look full of the fondness of a doating father, mixed with astonishment, “ what sayest thou, Agatha Singleton, (and thy word is not to be doubted,) hast thou any reason to suspect the honour of Leontine Craftly ? Speak, child, for shiver my top-sails, if I will be made a dupe of any longer by my own children ; dost thou know ought of treacherous conduct in my kinsman ?”

“ Alas, too much ! I suspect, Sir,” cried Agatha, “ that this artful and insidious being, in whose honour you have so long reposed, is even now aiming a blow at the destruction of your family. Jessy, your darling child, would have been deceived by him ; I averted the blow which was destined at her peace and ruin. Olive next becomes the prey of the licentious libertine, if means are not taken to prevent it : already has he found opportunity to con-

taminate her heart and pervert her principles ; and I am the object of his secret malevolence, because he knows that I am fully aware of his designs on this lovely and innocent object of his base arts ; he would stab me to the heart, were it possible, for having been the instrument of saving Jessy from his licentious passion. He well knows that I have discovered his perfidious designs ; and Heaven only knows what he is now working for my destruction, or what rumours he has spread abroad to injure my good name. For your daughter Olive he has now spread his snares ; and I fear that her affections are already gained by this perfidious relative ! Never, Sir, could Olive have acted as she has lately, but by the advice of this artful and dangerous young man. Jessy, weep not, for you have little cause to lament the perfidy of so faithless a lover."

"Why, shiver my top-sails, am I awake, or in a dream," exclaimed the fisher, on whose countenance a thousand agitations were working, and all of them of the most violent kind ; "and was it that viper that crept into the heart of my darling, only to rob her of her bloom and her sweetness, and then to leave her to wither and die ! Why, Jessy, you never told me that you loved your kinsman ! and villain that he was, he never told me ! Foolish wench, thou should'st have known better ; but thou art young and tender, and thought that the serpent meant to deal with thee fairly, cursed hypocrite ! But, by the eternal Power that created me, he shall feel a father's vengeance ; whenever he crosses this threshold again, I will not spare him, Jessy, though thy mother stood between to plead in his behalf. So, Mistress Olive too, must needs have a hankering after this abandoned knave ! Let her ; but, shiver my top-sails, it shall be at a distance : a pest on the Jezebel ! and let her take him, and joy go with her. But, Agatha Singleton ! thou angel of goodness, what shall I say to thee ? I suspected this caitiff—yes by my soul ! I suspected him ! But fire and fury ! when I looked at the picture of the innocent boy over the mantle-piece, I could not bring myself to think harm of him. No matter, I will unkennel the hound ! and if he has harmed thee, my dearest Agatha, he shall dearly repent it. Meanwhile, let us look after Olive. If the rascal has dishonoured

a child of mine, I would twist a rope's yarn about his neck with as little remorse as I would round a snake ; a scoundrel, that has warmed him by my quiet fire-side, only to rob a father of the dearest treasures of his heart, his children ! And Margaret, too, at her time of life to encourage such proceedings ! Ungrateful woman."

"Permit me to say, Sir," cried Agatha, "that I do not believe Miss Craftly is at all conscious of the impropriety of her brother's conduct ; nay, I will venture to say that she is wholly innocent of the design he has had, to ensnare the affections of your daughter ; I was a witness on the last evening that I saw her, of a violent attack of abuse made on her by Olive, and she would not have borne it with such forbearance, had she been privy to the intercourse between Leontine and your daughter ; do not therefore accuse this amiable woman unjustly, or impute to her any part of her brother's indiscretion. A sister, though so nearly related, is by no means answerable for her brother's misconduct."

"No, indeed, Margaret is innocent," cried the weeping Jessy ; "she did not know that Leontine had ever professed the ardent attachment he once did even to me."

"The ardent devil !" vociferated the fisher in a voice of thunder, "and how came you, wench, to suffer any man to profess an ardent attachment for you, without the knowledge of your father ?"

This was a home-stroke for poor Jessy ; and a fresh flood of tears was her only reply. But Agatha did not long suffer the amiable girl to remain under the lash of her father's displeasure, for she instantly exclaimed,—

"Hold, Sir ! bend not the bruised reed already bowed to the earth by the consciousness of that reflection : she has wept abundantly, when convinced by the unworthiness of the object who so artfully imposed on her. Had he continued worthy of her affections, Jessy would not have kept her sentiments from her father ; she has assured me that it was not her intention : she was deceived, and then concealed the pain it would give to your heart by the knowledge of it,—in her own ; it has cost her many pangs to do it. You must forgive her, or never pardon me !"

"I do forgive her from the bottom of my soul ! and pardon you also, Agatha Singleton," uttered the fisher, pressing his beloved child to his heart with the most uncontrollable affection : " God help us ! what should we be if we did not learn to forgive one another, how could we look for pardon in that happy country, where all travellers go, but none return ? Come, Jess, dry thy tears, and never let me see you shed another for that profligate scoundrel, who intended to have occasioned you to shed thousands, had his cursed arts prevailed. But for Olive, watch her closely ; follow her every where, and both in and out of the house see that she does not escape you. I much fear, that though absent, she is carrying on some sly work with that artful knave ! Agatha, my dear, have you never once suspected that a correspondence exists between them ?"

Agatha, after some hesitation, replied,—

"I do indeed, fear so, Sir ; but while he is absent, there is no danger of her transgressing her duty ; and on the return of Mr. Craftily, I would certainly recommend you to the nicest circumspection of her conduct."

"I will take pretty good care of that," answered the fisher ; "I will lock her up in a dark chamber, and feed the hussy on bread and water till I have brought her to her proper senses. I will teach her to run after young fellows with a witness."

"I have been told that Love laughs at Locksmiths, Sir," rejoined Agatha, half smiling, and blushing at the same moment.

"Shiver my top-sails ! if ever I let her laugh at me, I will break her neck first," vociferated the fisher ; and having finished his usual repast, which had been so unpleasantly interrupted, he looked at his watch, and protested that it was quite time for him and David to set out for Cromer for the boys, having promised them that they should pass the ensuing holiday fortnight at Herring Dale, "I forgot to tell you, my love," continued the fisher,— "that I met Mr. Gillman yesterday at the White Hart, and that your favourite, Wolf, he informs me, is grown one of the finest fellows in the whole school, and takes to his learning most surprisingly. So I told Mr. Gillman that I would have them to Herring Dule for a week or so these very next holidays, which commence

to-morrow. Now I mean to pop upon the young dogs when they least expect to see me, and bring them home with me this very day."

"Beloved boys! how I shall rejoice to behold them again," exclaimed Agatha.

"And so shall I," cried Jessy; "dear Alfred, he must be much improved; and Wolf, too, with all his little mischievous tricks, I long to see him again; and he will so long to see you, Miss Singleton! The boy perfectly idolizes you."

"No, no, you mistake, Jessy," cried Agatha, "but he is grateful for the little lessons I have taught him; they have tempered the wild little rustic, and he perceives that he is liked the better for it."

"And not before he wanted taming, I must needs own," retorted the fisher, who was always exceedingly jealous of our heroine's great partiality to poor Wolf, and would not now disguise his feelings; "for curse me! if ever I beheld such another unlicked cub in all my born days, before Agatha took him into training."

"Ah, Sir! and well might he be deemed so," uttered Agatha; "a poor deserted, neglected, unacknowledged child! No mother, to cradle his infant head;—no father, to hail or welcome the hour of his birth;—poor Wolf! hard and rugged was the path in which you was destined to wander: but, why do I say destined? it is impious to suppose so. When was the Hand that formed us, cruel or unkind! there was still a shelter provided for him; and when the rough tempest cast him on the waves, it gave him both a father and a friend! Oh! may he ever prove worthy of such kind protection."

The fisher was softened into a warmer regard for the absent Wolf than he had ever felt before; for the affecting tone and manner in which this was uttered, had in a great manner subdued the spark of jealousy which had so long laid dormant in his heart against the poor forest boy. A tear glistened in his eye; and he slowly uttered, as he rose to issue orders to David for his immediate departure,—“Hope he will, poor lad, don't doubt but he will merit every kindness that I can show him in a fisher's humble dwelling; and while he does, shiver my top-sails! if ever I send

him afloat again to the briny ocean, or cast him in the black forest, to be eat alive by the wild boars.—Jess, get a glass of brandy poured out; I must wet my whistle, before I start for the boys." So saying, the fisher went out in search of his trusty squire; and this being the first moment that Agatha and Jessy were left alone since the unpleasant incident of the morning, the latter threw her arms around the snowy neck of our lovely heroine and exclaimed,—

"Oh! dearest Miss Singleton, from what a painful explanation and mortifying trial of my feelings have you relieved me! never could I have ventured to disclose to my father the discovery he has now made; never could these lips have revealed that Leon-tine Craftly was unworthy my regard, or told my father how basely he has treated me; I always trembled at the moment when he should be informed of it. And, dearest Agatha, I now tremble at the vengeance which will overtake him from the too just resentment of my enraged father."

Jessy blushed deeply as she uttered these words, and Agatha, looking gravely at her, replied,—

"And why, Jessy, should you shrink from the confession of truth! and why should you tremble at the detection of a base hypocrite, who would never have trembled for you, had you fallen the victim of his licentious passion, but have left you at the mercy of that father, of whose affections he had rendered you unworthy. Why should you feel pity for him who never yet shed one tear of compassion for you, and who, having failed in his dishonourable intentions toward you, now seeks the ruin of your sister's peace, perhaps of her honour; and thus the perfidious and ruthless betrayer of our helpless sex goes on; he is not contented with one victim, but many to consummate and complete the measure of his crimes; forbear, Jessy, to bestow a thought on that worthless libertine; do not let me suppose that something more than regret fills your heart at the detection of his guilt; or that you still remember the time when you considered him worthy of your affections; rather let us endeavour to save Olive from his snares, so deeply designed for the destruction of her happiness, and save your poor father from heaping curses on the head of a dishonoured child."

"But, perhaps Leontine will marry my sister," cried Jessy, struggling to suppress a bitter sigh.

"Never," replied Agatha; "as soon will he marry me, or I consent to become the wife of such a villain; no, Jessy, be assured that he has no such intentions. A libertine is the last man on earth to take a wife, the very sound is appalling to his ear, or if he does, 'tis a voice that tempts him; but this will not be the case with Olive and Craftly; a far less happier lot awaits her if she falls a prey to the arts of this monster, than even the being wedded to him, for though then deserted and neglected, she would still be pitied and respected, but for the deserted object of illicit love, when did the world ever show respect or even compassion? Alas, no, the finger of scorn is pointed at her as a proper mark of contempt and abhorrence, she is shunned by her own sex, and by the other, considered only as their prey, and they will treat her with any thing but respect, at last she sinks into the grave unnoticed, unpitied, and unlamented, even by those who paid homage at the shrine of her beauty. Oh, Jessy, Jessy, do you not tremble at the picture,—tell me, sweet girl, do you not shudder at it?"

"Merciful Heaven, protect my sister!" exclaimed Jessy, bursting into tears at the same moment. "Oh, Miss Singleton, should such be the fate of my sister, alas, my poor father never would survive the shock, and she would indeed bring his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, as Margaret says, and, oh! how deeply would the disgrace of Olive afflict me, occasioned too, by one who"——

Jessy stopped, she feared that another sentence should escape from her lips that would be displeasing to Agatha, who instantly exclaimed,—

"Mention him no more,—think of him no more, or think only of him with the just abhorrence and contempt which so well becomes the character of our sex, when deeply injured by the treacherous beings who ought rather to protect us from the insults of the merciless world, than expose us to the censure of it."

Jessy made no reply, but the tear of sensibility still trembled in her soft azure eyes, nor did she attempt to conceal them from the observation of her bosom monitress and friend, whose firmness and dignity of character it was not the lot of Jessy to be endow-

ed with ; but the disposition of the fisher's youngest daughter was formed of materials so gentle and so mild, so forbearing and so sweet, that naught could change it to the aspect of severity, or ruffle it into anger, even with those who wounded her in her heart's dearest core ; and she loved her sister Olive with all her faults, most passionately, even though her rival in the affections of the man she had once so dearly loved,—yet still Jessy loved Olive, and felt shocked at the supposed picture, which Agatha had drawn of her fate, provided she was so unfortunate as to fall a prey to the insidious arts of Leontine Craftily, and it was the dangerous situation in which that beloved sister now stood, that excited her tenderest compassion towards her, and drew tears of sensibility from her lovely eyes, which, added to the extreme softness and timidity of her gentle disposition, made her tremble and shudder at the alarming crisis of Olive's fate.

Her beloved, her only sister, the child of her dear and sainted mother, was on the brink of a precipice, and inevitable destruction would await her, if no helping hand was stretched out to snatch her from the fall ; and could she prevent it how blest, how supremely happy, would she feel, and what sacrifices would she not make, what dangers would she not encounter, to save a helpless sister, and avert, if possible, the impending ruin which hung over her devoted head. Oft had her humanity been exercised in behalf of the forlorn wanderer, and the unfortunate stranger oft too had shared the blessings of her bounty, and how happy had she been rendered by the reflection : but to save a dear sister, what difficulties would she not achieve ?

Oh, woman, in thy heart the milk of human kindness is inherent to thy helpless and defenceless sex ; the pitying tear was never yet denied when solicited for a suffering sister, whether frail or unfortunate, they are induced to afford them their assistance, ready to soften their pangs, and relieve their sorrows ; they feel no terrors, while they fly to the presence of the hapless object of their solicitude, or rush into the sick chamber of the languid sufferer ; they naturally overcome all difficulties whatever the description, surmount all dangers, dismiss all apprehensions, and possess themselves of the most admired fortitude, giving to man-

kind (the very opposite) the sweetest picture of delighted heaven; for what can be more delightful than seeing woman in this her natural sphere, and in that character in which she alone was destined to shine. But rob her of her softness, and of this compassionate kindness, and she is no longer woman,—no, she may wear the form indeed, but the original semblance is fled forever.

The fisher returned ready for his morning beverage, a glass of brandy, which he hastily swallowed off,—honest Davy having instantly put his orders into execution, by saddling his favourite mare, and mounting the white naggie himself, rode up with them to the gateway.

“And do Wolf and Alfred walk hither, Sir,” inquired Agatha, with seeming anxiety, to which her protector replied,—

“No, my love, I mean to give the poor rogues a ride, I shall hire a chaise, and put them in bag and baggage, from the White Hart Inn, where I am going to first, on a little business of my own;—but, shiver my top-sails, I shall be too late, and the Marquis is a particular man, I would not be ten minutes later than the hour he has appointed to meet him there, for the best wreck that could be thrown on our goodly coast, so I am off on my spanker. Jess, see to the dinner, my darling, let it be smoking hot, and swimming in gravy, you know my palate, wench, and heaven bless thee, thou hast never neglected it; thou lovest thy poor old father a bit, dost not thee, wench?”

“As I love the breath I draw,” cried Jessy, throwing her pretty arms around his neck, and snatching a hasty and affectionate kiss; and the fisher, smiling on her lovely face with the most unspeakable satisfaction, returned the salute with a hearty smack, while he exclaimed,—

“Thee bee’st a tender chicken, Jessy, God help thee, wench, should’st thou ever fall into rough hands, that would not use thee kindly; but, shiver my top-sails, let me see the serpent that would harm thee that’s all;—let him come before Peter Blust, sounds and fury, let me——”

“You will be too late for your appointment, my dear Sir,” cried Agatha, perceiving the sudden gust of passion which was now beginning to burst like a volcano from the mouth of the fisher.—

"There is David at the gateway with the horses, father," cried Jessy.

"Well, don't you see that I am quite ready for starting," uttered he, and lowering the tone of his voice into a softer key, he approached our heroine, and whispered,—

"Do you and Jessy go and talk a bit to that perverse hussy of mine; tell her that my passion is over, and that I have more than half a mind to forgive her."

"And the other half too, I hope, my dear Sir," cried Agatha, "say but that word, and you will make me happy beyond expression."

"Shall I, you little black-eyed angel," cried the fisher, seizing the snow-ball of a hand which was extended toward him with a look of the most irresistible sweetness; "why, then, shiver my top-sails, tell mistress Olive that I do forgive her, but that I have done it on purpose to please Agatha Singleton."

There was no time for making any reply to this speech so hastily expressed, for the fisher made a precipitate retreat, jumped on his horse, and with David in the rear, was out of sight of Herring Dale in an instant.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Well have you borne affliction;
Well have sustain'd your portion of distress:
And, unrepining drank the bitter dregs
Of adverse fortune! happier days await you;
Oh! guard against the perils of success!
Prosperity dissolves the yielding soul,
And the bright sun of shining fortune melts
The firmest virtue's dawn."

No sooner was the fisher completely out of sight of the gateway than Agatha and Jessy flew with impatience to obey the commands he had imposed on them, and to relieve, as they imagined, the painful apprehensions endured by Olive, in having so strongly ex-

cited the anger of her father by her perverse and excessively undutiful and improper conduct ; and first the anxious and affectionate Jessy inquired of old Alice whether her sister had taken her breakfast in her own apartment, and if she had had any conversation with her since she fled from the presence of her offended father ; but what was the surprise of both Agatha and Jessy when the old woman informed them that Olive had been out, dressed in an unusual manner, or rather in her very best attire, and was only that very moment returned, and had locked herself up in her chamber ; that she had made several attempts to speak to her, and to ask her if she wanted any refreshment, but she would not answer her a word.

" So, what could I do more, my dear Miss Jessy ?" continued Alice ; " for you know when Miss Olive has a mind to be contrary you may as well talk to the stone walls as persuade her to listen to reason ; ah ! well-a-day, she is a graceless weed, I am grieved to say, and will drive my poor master one of these days to do her a mischief, which is a sad pity, for, saving when he is in one of those terrible fits of passion, there is not a better, kinder-hearted soul living. Now do ye go up stairs, my dear Miss Jessy, and talk to her a bit, and if she won't listen to you, perhaps she may be persuaded by that lovely young lady ; do ye, dear Miss, try what you can do with her before master comes back again."

Alice urged this request with so much anxiety, and with a look so supplicating in the face of Agatha, that she instantly replied,—

" I will, good Alice, be assured that I will do all that I can to restore Miss Blust to the affections of her father ; though I greatly fear that no influence of mine will prevail with her at the present moment, for I too have unfortunately offended her."

" Alas ! the day," cried Alice, " and yet, sweet child, thee would not offend the worm that crawls before thee ; neither would my dear Miss Jessy ; tender lamb, she has borne many a despicable glance of her scornful sister ; she has crossed Miss Jessy ever since she was born, and yet she bears her no ill-will. Well, well, Heaven will reward her ; and as for Miss Olive, she will have her day of sorrow, or old Alice will be much mistaken ; I have heard say there be always one raven among swans in a family, and sure

enough it be, like Miss'Olive and Miss Jessy, for every body knows who be the raven and who be the swan, that comes to the house of the Fisher Blust; but go your ways sweet ones, go your ways, and may Heaven prosper you with the perverse and the foolish one."

So saying, old Alice hobbled away, to superintend her domestic employments, for her age, and often her infirmities, precluded her from taking a very active part in her situation, and from which the assistance of Agatha's attendant had lately entirely spared her.

Meanwhile, our heroine reminded Jessy that with respect to Olive they had now but one plan to pursue, and that was, to go immediately up to the door of her chamber and use the gentlest entreaties to induce her to give them admission, to assure her of her father's forgiveness, to persuade her to terms of peace with him, and to yield a little to his humour when he should return at dinner time.

"We shall then have discharged our duty, you know, my dear Jessy," continued Agatha, "and whether she listens to us or not, shall have no blame attached to us by your father, for not having used our best endeavours with this wayward girl."

"Come, let us go this moment then, dearest Agatha," cried Jessy; "for indeed, indeed, I would not for the world she should continue thus the whole of the day, it would so sadly vex poor father; but, gracious me, where could Olive have gone this morning, I wonder! and so dressed too, as Alice says; do you not think it something very odd and strange, Miss Singleton?"

To which Agatha replied, "My dear, I do not think any thing that Olive does either strange or wonderful, for she is naturally a compound of contrarieties altogether, which it would be utterly impossible for you or I to expound, be we ever so cunning. Maybe she went to visit her kinswoman; though, now I think of it, that is scarcely probable, from the terms on which they separated the last evening; and besides, I have too high an opinion of Margaret Craftly, as once to imagine that she would encourage a daughter in undutiful conduct toward a father."

"Then, if not to Margaret, to whom did she go?" exclaimed

Jessy, turning pale at some apprehension that seemed suddenly to possess her mind.

"That I cannot inform you, my dear little trembler," uttered Agatha, half smiling as she drew her arm within her own; "so let us not waste in conjecture the time that we ought to employ in words;" and they immediately went to the door of Olive's chamber; at which, having softly knocked, they intreated to be admitted; at first, no answer was returned; but the second time of Jessy's repeating the "dear Olive, pray let me in;" the shrill voice of her still highly offended and enraged sister, became very distinguishable in the following words:

'None of your dears to me, Miss Jessy; dear me! a fiddlestick's end; for I am none of your dears, I will soon let you know; so you may get along about your business. What, I suppose you have brought Miss Singleton, with a rod in her hand, to make me a good child, if I don't do as you bid me; but you shall see the difference, Miss Jessy; I don't care a brass farthing for you nor Miss Singleton either.'

"And why won't you open the door, Olive?" demanded Agatha, scarcely able to preserve her usual sweetness of temper with so perverse a vixen; "why will you persist in making your poor father, and every body else around you, so uncomfortable and unhappy. Olive, I beseech you, I implore you to open the door, and hear only what Jessy and I have got to say to you; I do not ask you to converse with us, if you are inclined to be alone, only hear me."

"Well, cannot you talk outside of the door as well as you can inside of it?" demanded Olive in a sullen and surly tone. "I suppose its nothing but a fudge of Miss Jessy, what you have got to say to me, only that I may let you both in; but I shan't if I don't please, remember that."

"But suppose, Olive, that it should please you, come, for once, try to be pleasing;" uttered Agatha, in a half serious and half playful accent, and attempting once more to soften the inflexibility of this obdurate creature.

"But it won't be to please Miss Jessy," retorted Olive, in a far less surly tone, and between a giggle, that she had found the so-

No. 13.

cret means of tormenting her gentle kind-hearted sister ; " it won't be to please her, I can assure you ; but—but—I don't know whether it may not be to please you, Miss Singleton ; for, after all, I don't think you intended to make mischief between me and father ; so here goes the bolt—there now, come in and see the lions."

" Thanks, dear Olive," cried Agatha, immediately walking in, with poor Jessy quietly stealing behind her ; " now, indeed, you have pleased me beyond expression ; come now, I shall sit down without further ceremony ; but, Olive, what have you been about ? how delightfully you have dressed yourself to-day ; positively, I never saw you look so handsome since I have been at Herring Dale ; how charmingly you have arranged those jetty tresses of yours ; but that green dress does not so well accord with your complexion ; you would look better in white, such a robe now as I wore the other morning, when I went over to the Cliff, how exceedingly well you would look in it."

" What signifies your telling me that, when you know I have not such a dress in my whole wardrobe, Miss Singleton," cried Olive, half pleased with the compliments which had been bestowed upon her by one who never paid any, and half angry that Agatha had reminded her of the beautiful robe which she had so greatly envied her the possession of ; " I don't know why you should be so ill-natured, Miss Singleton, because you know very well that it is quite out of my power to procure such a lovely robe as you wore when you went to the Cottage on the Cliff. I should not wonder if that robe did not cost a matter of twenty guineas, and more ; and I was only saying to Jessy as much, did't I Jessy ?"

" This was the first word that Olive had thought proper to address to her poor unhappy sister since she had entered the chamber, and Jessy seemed delighted that she was getting into good humour with her. With this affectionate and generous girl, all Olive's petulance and ill humour were forgotten, as though she had never been unkind to her, and she smilingly replied,—

" Yes, I recollect, Olive, that you were saying something about Miss Singleton's beautiful robe to me, and wishing that father would purchase you just such another."

" Did I say that, Jess ?" cried Olive, now laughing ; " well, how

ridiculous that was, when I knew that was quite out of the question. There is not a robe like that to be had for love or money, is there, Miss Singleton?"

"Yes, I think there is;" answered our heroine, returning the smile most graciously; "and that I could very easily procure it for you on some few conditions in which money has not nor will have the slightest concern."

"My gracious, you don't say so," cried the now delighted Olive, going up to Agatha, and seizing her hand in the most passionate manner.

"There is only one way for this robe to be put immediately into your possession," retorted Agatha, in a firm and decided tone of voice; "I will name it to you, promise to fulfil the condition I shall propose, without once deviating from the performance of it—and the robe instantly becomes the property of Olive Blust, and not that, as it now is, of Agatha Singleton."

"What, will you indeed give me that pretty robe?" cried the now enraptured and weak-minded girl; "well, I protest, Miss Singleton, that is being extremely kind; and I am to give you something in return of mine for it, why so I will, any thing that you may take a fancy to;" so saying, the madcap ran to her drawers, and was going to display the whole of her wardrobe for the inspection of our heroine, had she not quietly withheld her, by exclaiming,—

"No, Olive, you mistake my meaning, I want nothing in return that you can possibly give me; nor are those the conditions on which you are to receive the robe, without which you will not have it at all."

Olive now looked serious, and even disappointed, and colouring deeply, desired to know what she was to do to obtain the prize. To which Agatha replied,—

"I will tell you, and sure you will acknowledge that I do not impose a very severe restraint upon your feelings, but, on the contrary, occasion you to experience the most pleasurable sensations, arising from the reflection of having made a dear father happy."

"Oh! now I see what you want me to do," cried Olive, a

brighter glow of crimson overspreading her fair face ; " I am to go down on my knees, and beg father's pardon for what I said to him this morning."

" Not on your knees, but with your arms folded round his neck," repeated Agatha, with peculiar earnestness and feeling ; " to assure him, that you are sensible you have been in error, that you are deeply afflicted with the thought of having offended him, and long most anxiously to be restored once more to his kind and indulgent love. Unless you will do this, Olive, when your father returns home at the dinner hour, the robe remains in my possession, instead of being freely presented to you, as the peace-offering of Agatha Singleton."

" Ah, my dear sister, do but promise this, you will make me so happy, and father will be so pleased," cried Jessy, the tear trembling in her lovely eyes.

" Well, and then I am to have the robe," cried Olive, " this very night, remember that it is to be this very night ; to-morrow it will be——" Olive stopped suddenly short, blushed deeply, hung down her head, and remained silently awaiting the reply of our heroine, who regarding the deep blush, and the almost undefinable look that Olive betrayed, answered,—

" Certainly to-night, if you so earnestly request it. I will not retract from my word, you need not fear it, my word is sacred."

" Well, then, I will promise you this," cried Olive ; " though I protest it will be the funniest thing I ever did in my life. I hate to kiss father, because I cannot endure the smell of that odious tobacco, which he is always taking, and I dare say that I shall laugh in his face. I know I shall not be able to keep my countenance all the while I am saying my lesson."

" Then you had better not say it at all," cried Agatha, gravely, and absolutely shocked at the insensibility of this shameless girl.

" Oh, yes, I will do any thing you bid me, for the pretty robe," uttered she ; " for I shall wear it to-morrow, if I should never put it on my back again."

" It would seem, that to-morrow were a day of great reckoning to you, Olive ; and yet to-morrow may never arrive to any of

us;" observed our heroine, exchanging looks with Jessy, which were immediately interpreted by her: "why so anxious for to-morrow, pray, Olive?"

"Don't you know that it is my birth-day?" cried Olive, looking alily at her sister; "has not father told you that? if it had been Jessy's, you would have heard it fast enough; but he will remember it to-morrow." And Olive began laughing most immoderately; not so Jessy, or our heroine, she had too much cause to remember the birth-day of Jessy, for it was the day that had dawned upon her with the loss of her poor father, and sighing mournfully, she exclaimed,—

"Ah, Olive, I shall never cease to remember Jessy's birth-day. Alas! on that day, I beheld the day returning with an orphan's bitter tears; poor Wolf and Alfred too, were saved from the dreadful wreck on the night of the tempest, and in that tempest my dear father found a watery grave; remember Jessy's birth-day, oh! I shall ever remember it with an anguished heart."

"Yes, but I don't see why Wolf or Alfred should take on about it," retorted Olive; "it was the best night's work that ever was for them, when father took them in, and fed and clothed them, as if they had been his own children, and sent them to school to get the learning of fine gentlemen."

"Your father also took me in," rejoined Agatha, repressing the warmth of her feelings as much as possible, "and Heaven will reward him for so benevolent and praise-worthy an action."

"But I would have sent Wolf a-packing, had I been father," cried Olive, "a surly little bear; he was not fit to come among people that were Christians."

"Your remark is unnatural and unjust," cried Agatha, much hurt by so malicious an observation on the poor boy; "and had your father your feelings, neither Wolf nor Alfred would have been much indebted to your humanity, kindness or protection."

"O gracious, I had forgot how fond you are of the boy Wolf," cried Olive; "well, don't be angry, Miss Singleton, I protest I did not mean to offend you."

"You have not offended me; be assured that I never take of-

fence at trifles quite unworthy of my notice," answered our heroine, looking at her watch at the same instant, and remarking to Jessy that the hour was growing late, reminded her that the fisher would shortly return,—

"And I have not yet once inquired of Alice, what she has provided to-day for dinner," exclaimed Jessy, "I must see after it immediately; so, dear Olive, good-by, be in good humour now with father, and with Wolf and Alfred, and with all of us, that's a dear girl."

And, without staying to hear Olive's reply, Jessy vanished in one moment, leaving her sister immoderately laughing at her tender anxiety about her; and our heroine more disgusted, if possible, than ever, with the mind, manners, and disposition of Olive Blust, in whose strongly contracted habits she feared that no reformation would ever take place, till eventually too late; she was also apprehensive, that though absent, her dangerous and insidious lover, Craftly, had by some secret means held a clandestine correspondence with this too vain and credulous object of his vicious pursuit and wanton passion, and was now using his influence over her weak mind in prompting her to some artful design, either on her own peace and honour or on that of some other, for there was something working in the heart of Olive, which it was very perceptible she had scarce the courage or the art to conceal, for she not only betrayed it in her manners, but in her words, during the short conversation she had held with her that morning; and she fervently prayed that the innocent and unsuspecting Jessy might not at last fall a prey to the evil machinations of Leontine Craftly; for herself he dared not attack her under the guise of friendship, because he was fully aware that she had already detected him in his dishonourable designs on the fisher's family, and if he approached her in any shape, it must be in the character of (what she believed him to be) a bold-faced villain.

All these thoughts had passed in rotation on the mind of our heroine; during the time that she was alone in her chamber, which she did not attempt to quit, till summoned by Jessy to dinner, who informed her that Wolf and Alfred had arrived, under the

care of David, but that her father would be detained at Cromer till a late hour in the evening in attendance on the Marquis of Montault, with whom he was transacting some particular business.

"So you must sit at the head of the table to-day, my dear Agatha, or Olive, who, would you believe it, is in the sweetest temper imaginable, I never saw her so agreeable, and is chattering away to the dear boys, in the most affable manner; but pray hasten down, for Wolf has been making a thousand anxious inquiries after his pretty sister already. Alfred is really grown a lovely fellow, so tall, so graceful and so handsome."

"But you say nothing about the improvements of poor Wolf," cried Agatha, with somewhat of a reproachful glance, "is he destined then to be of no consequence to any one but me?"

Jessy blushed and smiled, and smilingly replied,—

"Not so, dearest Agatha, for every living object who shares your regard must ever share mine, you must not chide me, for I had a motive in not mentioning Wolf very particularly, I assure you, in order that he might unexpectedly surprise my sweet friend by his appearance."

"So improved?" cried our heroine in a delighted accent, and the bright flash of crimson mounting to her cheek in an instant.

"Beyond any thing that you could possibly have formed a notion of," answered Jessy.

"I rejoice, oh! how I rejoice to hear it," exclaimed Agatha.

"Miss Olive wishes to know, Miss Jessy, whether you and my mistress are coming," cried Claribelle, putting her head in at the door.

"Go, Jessy, do not make her angry, I will be down stairs with you in less than ten minutes," cried Agatha.

Jessy immediately flew to obey the summons of her impatient sister, and before the dinner was brought upon the table, Agatha made her appearance in the little oak parlour.

Wolf and Alfred were both in conversation with Olive Blust, at the moment of her entrance, but the very instant that Wolf beheld his beloved sister and protectress, he eagerly advanced towards her, exclaiming,—

"Ah, beautiful and adored lady, and do I again behold you?"

so lovely too, and in health, then Heaven has heard my prayers, for Alfred knows how earnestly I have prayed for the health and happiness of Agatha Singleton ; and for these other sisters I have prayed too, have not I, Alfred ? but for you, lady, there is a charm, I know not what it is, that binds me eternally to you. Oh, I have often dreamt of you, and in my dreams I have seen ruffians tearing you from me, but with a lion's grasp I tore them piecemeal ; and so I would were my terrific dreams, that I have lately had about you, once but realized ; and should ever harm assail thee gentle lady, I would nerve my arm with a giant's tenfold strength to save thee."

So singular an address, from so courageous and undaunted a spirit as burned in the breast of this boy, would not, at any other period, have so visibly affected the feelings of our heroine ; but when she gazed upon the beautiful energy that lighted up the whole of his expressive features, with the athletic, yet manly grace of his finely proportioned form, and the speaking eloquence of his fiery eye, that darted like an eagle on every object that fell beneath it, she could not feel unmoved at the speech he had so particularly addressed to her, nor the strong fidelity of attachment he had expressed towards her, and holding out each hand for the acceptance of both him and Alfred, she exclaimed,—

"Dear brothers of my heart, here is a hand for each of you ; for both of you equally share my affection ! Oh, how I rejoice to see you both looking so well, and improved in stature ; of well proportioned grace too and feature. Dear loved youths, may each succeeding and returning year bring you an increase of happiness, and ripen you to maturity of virtue, goodness and perfection."

"Ah, dear lady, but you have promised us too much," cried Alfred.

"And why so, Alfred ?" cried our heroine, surveying his glowing cheeks, full of the modesty of youthful bashfulness, with unspeakable satisfaction, "do you not deserve all the good that I can wish you."

"Truly, lady, that is more than I can venture to say," answered Alfred ; "I hope I do ! but I have heard say, that none of us -

can reach perfection ; mortality can never attain to perfection, that belongs only to the saints above us."

" But we are taught to imitate that perfection, as far as mortal power can extend to," rejoined Agatha.

" And what is mortal power, lady ?" cried Alfred ; " Alas, with all thy seeming excellence thou can'st not tell me : though thou lookest as fair as one of Heaven's angels, thou art but mortal, and have but mortal wisdom ! Lady, I have searched for wisdom this many a long day, and in holy chapter too, and found, that men have erred, aye and women too, even in those days, and in long time before them."

Astonished by so unexpected and grave a reply, from one so youthful, and with the solidity of mind that he possessed, our heroine was perfectly silent, and by turns surveyed the countenance of the sentimental youth, and the more glowing one of the impetuous Wolf, who though far less polished than the accomplished Alfred, bore stronger energy about him, and while the other astonished you by the profundity of knowledge he had acquired in his researches after learning, the undaunted, spirited Wolf charmed with less pains and elaborate power of language, because his alone was the voice of nature and of feeling, which he seemed to have drawn in with his first breath ; his nerves were not to be shaken but from some powerful incentive, and then his whole soul was to be absorbed in the action ; there was no medium in the disposition of Wolf ;—when he was wrought up to this feeling he was either all fire, or cold as the Alpine snows, which nothing had the power to dissolve ; while the temperature of the more gentle Alfred was to be moulded to the waxen impression of insidious flattery, and conquered by the syren and bewitching voice of fascination and beauty.

Such were the two youths now before our heroine, and rightly had she formed an estimate of their opposite characters ; often had she heard her dear father say, that men are not always firm when they seem so, nor yielding when they appear kind ; so is apathy sometimes affected by them, and the very height of their enthusiasm, and extravagance of their professions, doubtful and uncertain.

Agatha declined doing the honours of the table, though strongly urged, even by Olive Blust, to preside in the absence of her father.

"Then Alfred shall sit there, and cut up the turkey," cried Olive, forcibly pushing Alfred in her father's place; "I protest that I hate carving, it fatigues one so."

"And I really am unable to acquit myself of the honour you intend me, dear sister," exclaimed Alfred, blushing deeply; "and it is much better to confess my ignorance, than to mangle that fine turkey, which I should surely do, were I to attempt to carve it."

"So, between one and the other, we shall have no dinner till it is quite cold," cried Olive, pettishly, and taking her accustomed place at the table, "I wish Alice had got David to do this fatiguing business before the dinner was brought in, how silly we all look."

"If you will give me leave to officiate, I will do my best, sister Olive," uttered Wolf, instantly rising from his chair, which was stationed next to Agatha's.

"You carve a turkey as it ought to be!" cried Olive, with a disdainful sneer.

To which Wolf, spiritedly but not rudely, answered,—

"As it ought to be, sister, or I will not do it at all; permit me to give you an example of my skill."

"Oh, by all means, if you think you can succeed," retorted she.

And Wolf immediately taking Alfred's place, set about his task with so much alacrity, and disjointed the turkey so dexterously and properly, that when completed, he received the praises of the whole party, Olive protesting that none deserved to fill that place better than he, therefore desired that he would continue doing the honours of her father's table during the whole of the repast.

"But, my gracious, where did you learn to carve so well, Wolf?" uttered she; "I protest that father himself would not have managed it better; had you any turkeys for dinner when you were in the Black Forest, that you know how to disjoint them so cleverly?"

"No, sister," cried Wolf, "I was not there permitted to partake of dainties, for my food was of the most ordinary kind, and sometimes I had none at all; but it is not the first time that I have seen a turkey placed here, nor yet on the table of Mr. Gillman,

my preceptor, and he has frequently bade me observe him in carving, I did so, and to him I am indebted for the specimen I have just given; I assure you I wish not to take that merit to myself which I have only borrowed from another."

"Well, but Alfred had the same opportunity, had not he?"

Wolf made no reply to this rude interrogatory; but Alfred, smiling, uttered,—

"True, sister, but was not so fortunate as to profit by it."

The conversation was now changed to other topics, for Olive never continued constant to one, and was soon led to ask other questions far more interesting to her feelings and curiosity, and that was whether they had ever seen the Marquis of Montault, or any of his family, in the church of Cromer, "for I know Mr. Gillman goes there with all his young gentlemen," added she.

To which Wolf instantly replied,—

"Oh, yes, sister, and frequently conversed with them, that is, with the son of the Marquis, Lord Montague Montault, he is a most agreeable and affable gentleman, and knows Mr. Gillman; he often rides, upon his beautiful blood mare, which is one of the finest I ever was, over to our school, and sometimes he has staid to dine with Mr. Gillman."

"What, Lord Montague dine with Mr. Gillman, a poor country schoolmaster, when he can have such fine dinners at home!" cried Olive, with astonishment; "now, Wolf, you are only telling a fib, for who would believe such a thing of Lord Montague?"

"Sister, I am rather blunt in my manner, somewhat more so, perhaps, than becomes me," answered Wolf, deeply colouring, "but no one shall accuse me of wilfully uttering a falsehood, or speaking with insincerity, when asked for the truth; I appeal to my brother Alfred, if I am not perfectly correct in what I have just asserted, that Lord Montague has frequently dined with Mr. Gillman, and does not seem to disgrace himself by being the associate of so excellent a man."

"It is certainly true, sister Olive," exclaimed Alfred; "and whenever his Lordship has staid to dinner with Mr. Gillman, he always sent for Wolf and I into the parlour, and gave us apples and pears, aye, and money too, and he would insist on it, didn't he,

Wolf? though to be sure he always asked us a number of questions; but Wolf is Lord Montague's favourite; he is very fond of Wolf, and I know why too, but I must not tell—must I, Wolf?"

The embarrassment which Wolf now betrayed, was perceptible to every one: his face glowed with crimson, and he turned an angry and reproachful glance on Alfred, while he spiritedly exclaimed,—

"To hint at a thing, Alfred, and withhold an explanation is neither fair nor honourable, because it is putting it into the power of every one to conjecture falsely; if I am a greater favourite with Lord Montague than you, I know no reason why I have merited this preference, the questions his lordship asked were made to you as well as to me, only you did not think proper to answer them; it was the duty of one of us to reply to interrogatories, when made by a gentleman of his exalted rank and polished manners, especially one from whom we have received so many marks of kindness and attention."

The effect of so spirited a speech, and so ingenuously expressed, confounded and abashed Alfred, and he hung down his head in silence, fully conscious that he had merited the retort made by Wolf upon his feelings, and here the subject would probably have been discontinued, but for the officious and prying curiosity of the inquisitive Olive, who longed to be informed of the nature of the questions made by Lord Montague, and whether she had been made the object of his particular inquiry; for so insufferably vain was this weak-minded girl of her personal charms, that it would have been no difficult matter to have persuaded her that Lord Montague was captivated with her beauty.

"But, dear me, what could Lord Montague say to you that you don't like to tell, Wolf?" uttered she, softening into a smile of the greatest affability, and bestowing on Wolf a kinder glance than he had beheld for many a day; "come, it will be quite amusing to hear what a lord says, cannot you tell us?"

To which, with a deeper blush, Wolf replied,—

"I can certainly tell you if you are so solicitous to know, sister Olive, but I do not think that it will afford you a subject of much amusement or merriment either, it was only about one person, and that was my sister Agatha Singleton."

The expression of Olive's countenance underwent a change of no very pleasing aspect at these words, though she endeavoured to conceal it with the best grace that was possible, by smothering a rude and affected giggle, and she exclaimed,—

“About Miss Singleton, my gracious, how funny, that Lord Montague could find no——” Olive was obliged to stop, for the look which our heroine now directed toward her was sufficiently expressive of her feelings, and she indignantly uttered,—

“You are right, Miss Blust, I also have to regret that Lord Montague did not find a fitter subject to talk about than Agatha Singleton, for which, I assure you, he has neither my thanks nor my praise; I do not want to be talked of by personages with whom I have no sort of connexion.”

Wolf, perceiving the involuntary warmth with which this speech was uttered, now felt it his duty to take up the cudgels for his absent friend, and with extreme earnestness assured our lovely heroine, that nothing Lord Montague had said respecting her, would reflect on the character of that amiable and honourable gentleman.

Agatha was silent.

“But you have not yet told us what that was,” cried Olive, still affecting a playful laugh.

“Nor will I, sister Olive,” replied Wolf, “unless permitted by my lovely sister.”

“You are impertinent, Sir,” cried Olive, disdainfully tossing her head.

“I am resolute,” answered Wolf,—by no means intimidated by her frowning looks.

“And properly so,” rejoined Agatha. “I do not see what right you have to question the boy about me, Miss Blust, or Lord Montague, unless you intend a premeditated insult, and I must insist that the subject be no longer continued, as being of no consequence to either party,—and excessively disagreeable to me.”

This was a check on Olive's propensity to mirth, and a most seasonable relief to poor Wolf; but the ever kind-hearted Jessy, in order to change the scene, which was beginning to wear a frowning aspect, immediately proposed making tea, and treating

Wolf and Alfred with some nice hot buttered cakes; to which they were all going to sit down, when Claribelle made her entrance into the room, and presented a sealed note to her young mistress.

"For me, Claribelle," uttered our heroine in some confusion, "you mistake, I have no correspondence with any one."

"But it is directed for Miss Agatha Singleton," cried Claribelle, as she placed it in the hands of her mistress, "and was brought by a servant in livery, from the Cottage on the Cliff. I asked him if he waited for an answer in return, he replied 'no,' and went away on the instant."

"From the Cottage on the Cliff?" repeated our heroine with some surprise, and immediately breaking the seal, read aloud the following words

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Ye powers! if innocence deserves your care,
Why have ye made it fatal to be fair!
Alike unfortunate, our state is such,
We please too little or we please too much."

"THE LADY who inhabits the Cottage on the Cliff requests to see Miss Singleton immediately, on a matter of importance to her own personal concerns, as likewise being connected with those of the lady's; and as the conference intended to be held with Miss S. is of the most *private nature*, she is particularly desired to come *alone*; she therefore wishes it to be *clearly* understood that no other *visiter* or *visitors* but *HER* will be admitted to the Cottage on the Cliff."

The latter part of this mysterious note, for such it evidently appeared to be, was peculiarly and strongly emphasised, and was perused by our heroine, with a mixture of surprise and astonishment, not to be expressed; various were the expressions which stole in succession over her lovely countenance, and many were

the conjectures which filled her breast as she read the contents twice over to her equally surprised, wondering, and youthful companions; and while they looked at each other with doubt and apprehension, Wolf and Jessy almost at the same instant exclaimed,—

“Go alone at this late hour,” for the shades of evening were imperceptibly advancing, “to the Cottage on the Cliff; and why alone dearest Agatha; pray, pray do not think of it.”

“Ah! do not venture there alone, my lovely sister,” cried Alfred, with considerable anxiety expressed in his countenance.

“Do not, I implore you, beloved Agatha,” repeated Jessy, “ah! that hated Cliff; I always trembled at the very name of it, yes, even when you inhabited it, it was still an object of terror to me; I always dreaded something there; alas, how shortly were my prophetic forebodings verified; the night of the tempest,—the shipwreck,—the loss of your poor father,—the flight of the treacherous Paulo,—the robbery he committed there,—all, all were connected with that frightful and tremendous Cliff. You are silent, Agatha, have you then no fears?”

“None that I either wish or ought seriously to indulge in,” replied Agatha; “I am an enemy to suspicion, I would not willingly cherish that viper only to sting me, dear Jessy, if I could by any means in my power shake it off. Why should I fear, or doubt the word of this illustrious though unknown lady, who so candidly confesses that her personal interest is connected with mine?”

“Nay, but is that probable, dear Agatha?” timidly inquired Jessy.

“No, but there may be a possibility that it is so,” replied our heroine, “and if so, it is indeed a matter of the highest importance to me to be informed in what manner. Intelligence of such a nature I was certainly unprepared to expect, and I much wonder at it; still were I to treat it with indifference or with contempt, it would be exceedingly improper, and excessively disrespectful to the lady, who is my tenant, and may for aught I know be my——”

Agatha paused, but an uncontrollable sigh burst from her bosom; though for some reason, her sentence of what this lady might be to her remained unfinished, and was probably not even guessed at by any of the party.

"Well, but if you go to the lady alone, there is surely no necessity of your walking to the Cliff alone," uttered Jessy.

"None in the least, my pretty sister," cried Alfred.

Agatha not immediately replying to this, Olive, who, contrary to her usual custom, had listened in silence to the foregoing conversation, and had neither expressed wonder, astonishment, or fear, at the contents of the note, now burst into an involuntary fit of laughter, while she exclaimed,—

"Why, how funny you all look; I protest I shall die with laughing to see your comical strange faces all staring at Miss Singleton, as if she were a mad woman, or that somebody was going to do her a mischief, merely because she is going up to the Cottage on the Cliff, to hear a grand lady's secrets, and to be made welcome when she arrives there."

"Yes, when she arrives there," cried Jessy, "and in safety, the lady will, no doubt, receive her kindly."

"My gracious, to be sure she will, very, very kindly," retorted Olive, still inclined to laughter; "and so will the gentleman receive her kindly, she will be taken care of among such fine grand folks, I dare say, won't you, Miss Singleton?"

The *Won't you Miss Singleton*, was pronounced by Olive in so peculiar a manner, and with such an increased disposition to laughter, that Agatha was startled and surprised, the more when turning on her a look of a gratified feeling of triumphant joy, she added, "but you won't forget the pretty robe, Miss Singleton, for if father should come back while you are gone, I will do just as you desired me to do, so I must have the robe before you go, because perhaps you won't be in such a hurry to return again."

"Oh! Heaven forbid, that our dear Agatha should stay long at the Cliff," cried Jessy.

"But I must have the robe, Miss Singleton," repeated Olive with great anxiety, "you gave me your promise, you know, and said that you never broke your word, and as to that frightened Jess, never mind her, I wonder what the dickens she thinks is going to harm you, only just taking that little bit of a walk up to the Cliff."

Agatha now looked steadfastly in the face of Olive, while she uttered these impressive words,—

"When we meet again, Miss Blust, perhaps I may be able to account for some of the extraordinary sentences you have addressed to me on this evening; for, be assured, there will be none of them that will escape my memory. The robe I have promised, nor do I wish to break that promise I have once pledged; although you have no right to claim it while the conditions for which I gave it you remain unperformed on your part; however, take the robe, the peace-offering, remember, of Agatha Singleton, to return to the affection and the duty which you owe to a dear father. When you wear this robe, so given, and so offered, it may haply remind you of this evening when Agatha Singleton set out to attend the summons of the lady in the Cottage on the Cliff."

"And are you then resolved to venture there alone, dear Agatha?" cried Jessy; "oh, why lingers my father, would that he were but returned, he might persuade you, though Jessy cannot." "Dear girl, be not thus uneasy on my account," cried Agatha; "there is no danger, I trust, that awaits a poor orphan, who never yet harboured one unkind thought to injure mortal;—but if there is, I shall still firmly rely on the interposition of that ever watchful Providence who never deserts its votaries, when they look up to it for protection."

Olive turned pale and red by turns, she was abashed and even confounded by so solemn an appeal, made by one so greatly her superior in all that was amiable and praiseworthy, and she averted her eye from her penetrating gaze; but in vain did she attempt to hide the ferocious expression of its invidious meaning; there was deep and dark design in its malicious glance, and the young undaunted Wolf was fixt in the earnest contemplation of features so beautiful, and to him so strongly marked with scornful pride and bitter irony, if she had been gifted with the intellect of expressing it, but Olive was a coward, and had no stimulus of her own; added to which, she was endowed with too small a share of understanding to act, (if we may so term it,) from any influence of self-principle, though she was self-interested in every action of her life, but she could not design any thing if not assisted by another in any stratagem that required the effort of talent, which, alas, is too often perverted to the basest pur-

poses and uses, however lamentably deplorable, it is too frequently the case, and then it were far better that we had never acquired knowledge at all, if purchased only with the loss of our immortal happiness, for to such ends are talents the most bright and shining applied; and thus does man, ungrateful and impious man, requite the blessings given him of reason and intellect over all other earthly creatures, those blessings he turns into curses, and when he fails, utterly fails in accomplishing his evil designs, he charges the author of his being with having acted with injustice and even cruelty toward him; but let him cease the guilty murmur, the hour of retribution, though slow in its advance, will, too speedily for him, yet arrive, and he must then make up his account, and carry the sum total of all his offences, whether great or small, to meet the eye which till now he has ever shunned, and in that awful and tremendous hour, no human vanity, no human power, will avail him;—but for the weak-minded being here before us, she was indeed but the instrument of a more evil spirit probably than her own, but this by no means served to atone for or even to extenuate her faults; it is not because others have vices, and use them to an extent that shock and surprise us, that we are to suppose that our own indiscretions are to be either pardoned or excused, on the shallow grounds that merely they are of a milder nature; and no sooner was Agatha arrayed in her bonnet and pelisse, for her expedition to the Cottage on the Cliff, than Claribelle, with tears in her eyes, requested that she might be the companion of her journey thither; to which our heroine replied,—

“Why do you infect me with such foolish and imaginary terrors, am I not forbade by the lady, who is my tenant, and wishes to converse with me on business of the most urgent nature, to carry any visitors along with me? does not her note say expressly that no admission will be granted but to me? How then, Claribelle, can you expect to accompany me thither, or so cruelly persist to inspire me with so much idle apprehension, where actually no fear or danger is to be dreaded; besides, were I to permit you to go, where could you stay during the time I was conversing with the lady? I could not leave you on the Cliff exposed to the cold winds blowing round you, you would be perished, Claribelle.”

"Ah, my dear young lady, and it would not be the first who has perished there, if you heard the tale that Shelly tells so oft; it would melt the heart of a stone, so it would, and were you to hear it, you would——"

"Certainly not be benefitted by it at the present moment," cried Agatha, "and therefore I had much better not hear it at all; cease then, Claribelle, this idle waste of words, to deter me from what I consider to be a part of my duty, go I must, and alone, to the Cottage on the Cliff;" but at this moment the head of Wolf had projected itself in at the door of her chamber, and without further ceremony or waiting for admission, he presently walked in.

"What want you, dear Wolf?" inquired Agatha: when to her surprise, he answered her somewhat surlily,—

"If I am dear Wolf, prove my fidelity toward you, lady; put me to that test, and I will answer it, were it with my life; go not to the Cliff without attendance, and let Wolf be your vassal to guard you thither; if you reject my services we may never meet again."

"What mean you," uttered our heroine, suddenly surprised as well as appalled by the soul-darting energy which appeared in the countenance and manner of this singular youth; "boy, you drive me frantic with these fears, expound them if you can."

"Lady, I have not yet learned to expound riddles, uttered he, "but I have seen those lately who deal in magic, haply something worse, for aught that I can tell; and 'tis said that whole nights she sits upon yon rude Cliff, that dashed our vessel's sides asunder, absorbed in thoughts that bode no good to mortal race, and she may harm thee, lady, should you cross her path."

"What bewildered dream hast thou conjured up to fright me, Wolf?" cried Agatha, smiling, and unwilling to express her fears; "thou would'st not delude thy poor sister surely with so wild and weak a phantom; where did'st thou behold this nightly visiter of the Cliff?—and when hast thou been at the Cliff, that thou art apprised so well of what passes there?"

"Do you then think, lady, that I have told you falsehoods?" uttered Wolf, reproachfully, but firmly; "I thought you had known Wolf better, far better."

"And so I do," cried Agatha, "had it not been a tale almost beyond credibility."

"Lady, the sybel bid me swear that I had never conversed with her, and I must not, dare not, utter what she has told me. Oh, she is so hideous to behold, I sicken when I think of her, at first I took her for a gypsy, but——"

"Merciful Powers, Claribelle, it is the old mad wandering gypsy that Wolf has encountered," uttered Agatha; "and if so, boy, she means thee no harm, a poor maniac, and knows not what she utters; but you should not have sworn, oaths are binding in the sight of Heaven; though perfidious men have made them void to one another, yet hold them sacred boy, as you value life; swear not again to mortal, but having done so, do not forfeit it. So thou hast seen the gypsy, and so have I, but I regard her not, nor does she fill me with terror."

"And I have seen her too," cried Claribelle, "but Heaven preserve me from ever setting my good-looking eyes on her again. Well, my dear young lady, you see she has frightened even master Wolf, with her queer outlandish gibberish, witchcraft, and spells, and it is not a little that would frighten him, I am sure."

"No, you say rightly, uttered Wolf; "it must be something more than the wanderings of a woman's wild distempered brain that would indeed cause Wolf to fear."

"And do you not believe her to be insane?" inquired Agatha, with certainly a mixture of astonishment not to be expressed, which was considerably heightened by the calm and decided reply of this spirited youth:—

"No, on my soul, lady, but I believe her to be wicked and prone to mischief;—nay, I think she has some dark and evil design now in view, for she told me that a lovely maid would shortly be——. Lady, lady, I must not tell thee, but to the Cliff go not without protection."

"Oh, merciful Heaven, the old barbarous wretch will surely lay her wicked spells on you, my dear young lady," cried Claribelle, wringing her hands and walking about the room in the most distracted manner; "she will maul you, perhaps, and eat up your sweet flesh. My grand-mother used to tell me that witches never feed but on human flesh."

"I will take care of that," cried Wolf, "she shall have the devil to eat before she touches a particle of Agatha Singleton, never fear that, Claribelle. Lady, am I to go with you to the Cliff or not?"

"Yes, yes, I will certainly take you with me, since you are so anxious about it," uttered Agatha, now preparing to quit the chamber, at the door of which she was met by Jessy.

"I have conquered," cried Wolf. "Dear Jessy, your wishes are now accomplished,—I go with sister Agatha to the Cliff."

"Heaven be praised!" answered Jessy, "that she has been persuaded at last; and had you not better have David too, dearest Agatha?"

"No, no, dear Jessy, do not ask me," answered she, "your father is not yet returned from Cromer: and I know how unwilling he would be that David should leave the house at so late an hour of the evening, while he is absent from home; besides, have not I a Wolf by my side,—what is more ferocious than a Wolf, pray?"

Our lovely heroine smiled as she uttered this to her youthful protector, but she was very far from feeling her wonted composure, as she wrung the hand of Jessy, and bade Claribelle farewell at the gateway; and yet she cherished no superstitious foreboding, it was not fear that agitated her gentle frame, she relied too firmly on the protection of Providence,—but it was the meeting with her illustrious tenant, at the Cottage on the Cliff, that she anticipated with a sort of feeling she had never experienced before, she had never been told that her mother was not in existence, even her father had never informed her that she had no longer a mother living, no human being had told her of the fate of her mother, and to her recollection she had never seen her; all her days to the present period, had been passed in the convent of the holy sisters, and no one there could tell her aught of her history. The Abbess of this holy sanctuary, though one of the most amiable and accomplished of women, was austere, and sometimes arbitrary in her religious duties, and soured and disgusted with the world herself, she could never bear to talk of it to her youthful novices; yet with the lovely innocent committed to her charge, at so tender

an age as was that of our heroine, she frequently relaxed of her severity, while the playful smiles of infantine loveliness often amused her, even in the cloistered gloom of a convent, and the little prattling Agatha was permitted to remain in the apartment of the Abbess when no other visiter could gain admission there; and once, when the Abbess was confined by a dangerous and severe illness, her little favourite was desired to be brought in to her.

"Nay, her noisy chattering will disturb thee, sister," cried the ghostly confessor, who had taken his station by the bed-side.

"Not so, holy father," calmly replied the Abbess, "the sight of that sweet child doth revive my drooping spirits; she is an innocent, hurtless flower, and can exhale naught but purity and sweetness: angels are like unto that smiling cherub; and are we not taught to believe, that of such are the kingdom of heaven. Quickly let that child be brought before me."

The order was of too imperative a nature to be disregarded, not even the power of the holy priest dared to act in opposition to such a high command, and the little novice soon appeared, lovely as the young rose ere it first breaks through the velvet bud that carefully wraps up its blushing leaves.

"Speak softly, child, or you will presently disturb the slumbers of our holy mistress," cried one of the attendant nuns, as she admitted little Agatha slowly to the vaulted chamber, which contained the languid form of the suffering invalid.

To which the trembling girl replied, (for she had a terror of the old nuns, so austere in their duties,)—

"Indeed, indeed, I will not harm her, I will be so still and so quiet, if you will but let me go near her bed-side and softly touch her hand; I will kiss it, but I won't so much as let a tear fall upon it lest it should awaken her; no, I will weep in silence, and pray in silence, and perhaps my prayers will be accepted."

"And what is thy prayer, child?" sternly inquired the old nun, but regarding the lovely innocent with perfect wonder and astonishment.

"What is thine?" quickly answered the youthful prattler.

To which the stern forbidding sister Barbara replied,—

"I am not used to answer interrogatories, so, Forward I shall not tell thee."

"Then, I will tell thee mine, sister Barbara," cried Agatha, "I pray, each night and morning, most fervently, that our good and holy lady, may speedily recover; that she may once more inhale the blessings of the cheerful morn, and that no one else may be appointed the Abbess of the Convent of the Holy Sisters, while Agatha shall remain within its cloisters, for I love the holy lady dearly,—ah, were she indeed my mother, I could not love her better."

"Thy mother," cried the nun, upraising her eyes, and counting her beads with professional devotion, (for certainly none other warmed her cold heart,) and, turning from the celestial countenance of the beautiful innocent with momentary horror and displeasure, she again repeated,—“The Abbess of the convent of the holy and immaculate sisters, thy mother! holy saints forbid! thou talkest profanely, child, and I would chide thee for it, did not thy youthful inexperience extenuate thy fault.”

"Ah, do not, do not chide me, sister Barbara," uttered the irresistible little pleader, "indeed, indeed, I meant no harm, nor knew I till now that it were wicked to wish that I had a mother like unto our holy lady; she is so kind, and smiles upon me so sweetly, and oft she folds me to her white bosom and whispers,—‘Bless thee, Agatha.’ So when she did so, I have wished that she were indeed the mother of poor little Agatha, that I might love her more and more; but if this be wicked, sister Barbara, and so great a fault, I will breathe that wish no more."

Sister Barbara uttered not a word, for she beheld at this moment the bosom of the sleeping lady heave with a gentle, soft and involuntary, though evidently struggled, sigh, but her eyes were still closed, and she feared that the least noise would disturb her; motioning the little Agatha, therefore to profound silence, she bade her sit down on a stool beside her, till the holy lady should awaken, and inquire for her; and Agatha obeying, the old nun became absorbed in her own reflections, which to say truly were somewhat of a suspicious nature, prejudicial to the purity of the immaculate lady, but as they were carefully locked up in her own breast, as a snake sometimes conceals its specious form in the dark and embowering deep shades, which renders it impervious

to all mortal view, so the thoughts and reflections of the crafty nun were hidden from all human knowledge.

What the child had so innocently revealed of the affection of the good and pious lady toward her, was construed into a measure of guilt, horrible to be conceived by the chaste bosom of a sixty-five years old nun; and her passionate fondness for the little smiling Agatha amounted to a full confession that she was nearly connected with this mysterious and beautiful child, for mysterious the introduction of this child into the convent of the holy sisters had always been considered by the chaste and pious sisterhood; it was said, that she was brought hither by her father, and that a prodigious sum of money was deposited in the body of the community, for the maintenance and uses of this lovely infant, and that further large and continued remittances were regularly invested in the hands of the Abbess, for the perfecting of her education as boarder in the convent, but that she was forbade to take the veil, however disposed to do so, by the express authority of her father, Captain Singleton, whose name the little girl bore,—but was he her father?—here was a puzzling inquiry for sister Barbara, and truly it would have puzzled wiser heads than her's to have solved the question; and if Captain Singleton was the father of Agatha, pray who was the mother?—that was a still more puzzling inquiry for the pious nun, and one she dared not investigate at the present moment, so she shut her eyes, again, and again, counted her beads, and turned her thoughts to—to what?—perhaps to Heaven, for what have nuns to do with earthly things?—but we cannot exactly tell whereabouts the thoughts of sister Barbara were; notwithstanding her holy calling, who can tell but they sometimes strayed to other subjects than to beads and orisons; or how did it enter into her pterocranium that the Holy Mother of the Convent was the mother of the beautiful child then seated beside her; a lady whose very image might have personified chastity, and whose virtues were reflected by the most pious and praiseworthy actions. And cannot even holy cloisters and vesper bells shut out that demon slander? does it indeed find shelter even in the holy sanctuary of sacred religion? Vile scorpion, it was thought that hell only was its fixt abode, and with

fiends only it was coupled! but, alas, having once visited the haunts of men, it sojourns there, and darts its deadly venom to sting the hearts of millions, that fall and sometimes perish beneath the baneful influence of its poisonous breath.

But to proceed with the Lady Abbess of the Convent of the Holy Sisters,—whether the lady had been sleeping or waking we know not, but it was evident, from the redness of her soft blue eyes, that she had been shedding tears, and that she was conscious of her little favourite being near her, for thrice she repeated the name of Agatha, and thrice sister Barbara permitted her to repeat it, before she suffered the little girl to attend the summons.

“May I not go to the lady, sister Barbara, when she calls me?” uttered the suppliant, in a beseeching voice, so sweet and plaintive that none but sister Barbara herself could have resisted its tender pleading.

“Hush, child, perhaps our lady is only dreaming,” replied the pious nun.

“Does she then dream of Agatha?” inquired the child, “for surely she has called me once, twice and thrice.”

“Let her call you again, and you shall go to her, said the nun.

At length the gentle lady drew aside the dark green silk curtains that overshadowed her fair form, and feebly articulated,—

“Does no one hear me, and if hearing, why am I not obeyed?—where is Agatha Singleton?”

The little girl, springing from her seat, was instantly at the bedside.

“Here, dear lady,” softly repeated she, “here is Agatha Singleton. I would have come to you before, when you called me, but sister Barbara was fearful that I might disturb you.”

“Sister Barbara is too officious with her fears,” uttered the lady in an offended tone; “sweet, smiling innocent, you cannot disturb me; though others may impede my slumbers, you can never harm them. Sister Barbara, leave the apartment, and wait in the anti-chamber, till I shall again require your presence. I would be alone with this child, and want no other attendance for

awhile; her prattle doth amuse me, thine is irksome, and doth fatigue me."

Sister Barbara obeyed:—but what were the thoughts and surmises of the pious nun, as she went forthwith from the chamber of the holy lady, may very probably be guessed at. Sister Barbara was too wise to communicate her thoughts and surmises to any other person; but she quitted the chamber with involuntary horror, counting over her beads till her very fingers ached with the fervency of her devotion.

But the child remained in the apartment of the holy lady for nearly two hours, and continued for that space of time, each successive day, to visit the holy lady, who, gradually recovering from her long and severe indisposition, perfectly doated on the lovely young novice committed to her charge. Meanwhile Agatha continued with years to expand in loveliness of person, as she improved in every mental grace and accomplishment, and no expense was spared in perfecting by art what nature had so beautifully adorned; she had strong intellect, great and powerful feeling, uncommon energy and quick and lively fancy, grateful and affectionate, mild but prompt in her actions, pure in her thoughts, and ingenuous in expressing them; indignant only when insulted or aggrieved; gentle in her rebuke, but firm and decided in her character, and all this perfection had gradually acquired habit and strength under the careful eye of her preceptress, the Lady Matilda St. Clare, Abbess of the Convent of the Holy Sisters; it was by her hand that this lovely flower was reared, and daily opened into sweetness and luxuriant beauty, but it was with the temperature of spring more than the glowing tints of summer that these beauties were cultivated, and with moderation by her skilful instructress, and when she inquired what the world was like, and what the creatures were who lived in it, Lady Matilda's reply was,—

"The less you know of it you will like it better; when you are old enough I will tell you what it is, and you will despise it: but I cannot teach it you, my child! alas, it is only by experience that you must learn how fallacious are its promises, how deceptive are its smiles, how terrible are its frowns, and how visionary are its

prospects of happiness ; still, while virtuous, you may be borne down its stream and repel its force, however bitter : while you have fortitude it will be disarmed of half its terrors and its fears, as death is to the truly good and pious christians, who have done virtuously while they have lived here, and do not fear to die."

"And yet death is terrible, dearest lady," cried the youthful novice ; "I have heard, to die young is to die happy, but then it must be very young ; for I am young, and yet methinks to die and leave you, lady——" the little trembler paused as she looked full in the mild blue eyes of Lady Matilda, but she saw displeasure marked there in characters too legible to be mistaken ; it was an expression which seldom took possession of so celestial a countenance, and a tear trembled in the eye of the little novice, when her preceptress pronounced,—

"And does Agatha regard me more than him who made her ?—thy Father, thy Heavenly Father ! Were you to die now, you would surely be transplanted to a happier state than frail, weak, perishable, suffering mortality ; have I not told you that death only is terrible to the wicked ? but as for human ties, lovely child, rest not your heart upon them, or they will break your spirit with the burden : they must quickly dissolve, Agatha, but if you love your God, he will be ever near you when all human friends will fade away."

The young novice fell upon the bosom of Lady Matilda and wept, and awhile she bore with the excess of sensibility which swelled to sobbing the bosom of the lovely girl ; but this was the proper season to check it, and her preceptress chose it.

"I do love my God," cried Agatha, "but, as I love my God, is it a fault to love you also ? I could not leave you, lady, without shedding tears, even though I went to Him !"

"My child, there is danger in this excess of sensibility," uttered the lady, "it will be fatal to you if thus indulged, you must acquire power to check it e'er it be too late ; and you cannot hope to do this, but by imploring the assistance of Him who made you, and by the laudable exertion of that strong intellect he has so liberally gifted you with. I do not mean to say that you should possess no feeling, but temper it with submission, moderation, pru-

dence, and a perfect resignation to the will of your Heavenly Father, by whose ordinance all worldly objects move in diurnal course, whether in prosperity or in adversity ; this will be your guide, your monitor and friend, and by this firm and unshaken bias of well-founded principle, my Agatha will bear the evils (if she cannot escape them,) that may fall to her lot through this worldly pilgrimage of care, the bitter thorns of compunction, and the heart-wounding reflection of self-reproach. Be independent of your own thoughts, Agatha ! cling to the only source from which you will derive consolation in the adverse hour of danger, temptation and sorrow, and let the tempest spend its fury,—it may appal but it cannot crush you, while you bear an upright heart about you, and a firm reliance that you will be uplifted by that hand which governs the whole of universal space, air, seas, winds :—all created objects must (for vain and impotent is their power) yield to Him ; tyrants must fall,—empires be overthrown,—monarchs die,—if so he wills it ; and every earthly creature bend submissive to his power. In the spring of opening life, while the blossom of youth yet scatters roses round your brow, review the picture I have drawn to help you, my child, with wisdom to discriminate the object there pourtrayed ; if not in lively colours they are true ones ; and the blessing of Matilda, of innocence, peace and virtue, be with you and remain with you for evermore.”

A silence of some moments prevailed, and the first look that the young novice regarded her preceptress with, produced a perfect conviction on the mind of the pious lady, that her solemn and affecting exhortations had succeeded, and converted her youthful pupil into all she wished her to be. It is no wonder then that, guided by such a preceptress, our heroine gradually acquired a habitude of manner and an energy of mind far beyond her youthful years, and that, when she quitted the Convent of the Holy Sisters, and was consigned to the care of her Father, (so perfect from the hands of Lady Matilda,) he beheld his lovely daughter with the most transported eyes, and regarded her as the choicest blessing that heaven could bestow ; in his evening of life, one brilliant light illumined his cheerless hour, and embalmed the influence of gloomy reflection ; and, like the dew that falls from roses,

so he inhaled its precious fragrance,—it was the smile of his heaven-born child, his young and lovely Agatha.

CHAPTER XXV.

" Her cheeks blush deep with rosy streams,
Glow with unusual fires ; her arm, her hand,
No longer move with langour ; all her frame,
In animated gesture, speaks the soul ;
Though still her timid modesty of mind
Tempers with grace the beauty of her mien."

WITH a mind thus early formed, and a disposition thus tempered to reflection, by the precepts of so accomplished and able an instructress as the Abbess of the Convent of the Holy Sisters, (Lady Matilda St. Clare,) it is no wonder that our lovely heroine had acquired a philosophy to meet the after evils of her fate with heroic firmness and patient forbearance, (which older and more experienced females would have sunk under,) and which supported her in the most trying and eventful hour of her whole existence,—the untimely death of her father ; she had indeed yielded to the first excess of grief with involuntary bursts of anguish, which were uncontrollable, but on the second, her tears were forbid to flow from the effects of her education, and the holy and pious submission she had been taught to render to the will of heaven, and like the lily in the storm, she bended, but did not break, as she trembled beneath its pitiless beatings. To have imagined, therefore, that a mind and a heart so framed as those of Agatha Singleton, could be appalled at mere imaginary dangers which really had no serious grounds for apprehension or fear, would only have been doing her the greatest injustice ; and it was not fear that agitated her throbbing bosom, when she wrung the hand of Jessy as she departed with her youthful protector from the gateway ; but it was a sensation wholly new to her, as it was almost one of a heaven-born kind : it was the ecstatic, yet scarcely half-formed

hope of meeting in the illustrious tenant of the Cliff, strange and however mysterious it might appear, Agatha fondly, anxiously hoped to behold—a mother: for never had her father told her that her mother was no longer in existence; but that they had been disunited from some powerful cause she had always conjectured, though she had never been told so by him, nor Lady Matilda, who, like her father, had always evaded any questions that might resolve her doubts on so mysterious a subject. Once indeed, when she had made of the holy Abbess her usual inquiries of,—“Is my mother dead?—and did she resemble you or me?—whom did she resemble, lady?” she received the following singular reply:—

“Child, would you have me answer what I do not know?—you were but a tender suckling when you were brought into these cloisters, and consigned to my arms, by——” The Abbess paused, and struggled to suppress a sigh, which did not escape the observation of the youthful inquirer, and yet more anxiously she exclaimed,—

“Ah! by *whom*, lady, was I consigned to your arms, I implore you to tell me?”

And the Abbess somewhat sternly replied,—

“Your father: think you a mother could have parted with the little nursling from her fond breast, to yield it to another’s care?—no, Agatha, think not of mothers so inhumanly: nature, holy nature, here claims pre-eminence over all other ties, over all other connexions; there is none so dear, so soft, so pure, so tender, so resistless as the babe to the mother who has given it birth. Cease, then, Agatha, to interrogate me further on this subject, to me the most painful, because it is unavailing;—you will ask of Matilda but in vain aught of your mother;—yet the question is natural at your age,—in truth I cannot blame you.”

“Or at any age, is it not natural, dear lady?” again inquired the youthful pleader, and with tearful eyes, “If a babe is so dear to a mother, as you have just described, what must the mother be to the babe?”

“I command you to desist,” cried the Abbess, as if she had made an involuntary effort to subdue the weakness of her momentary feelings, and then resumed the firm tone of her character;

"why do you rather choose to anger me than submit to my authority ; wayward child, why do you oppose my wishes ?"

"Indeed, indeed, I will not again do so, dear lady," uttered the little trembler. "Forgive, but do not chide me."

Whether the Abbess kissed off the tear which then fell on a neck pure as the Alpine snows, and fair as the plumage of the swan, we cannot positively attest, for the evening bell sounded a retreat for the one, and proclaimed that the hour of vespers was at hand for the other ; but this subject was never afterward resumed between the preceptress and her pupil, nor the slightest hint given of it when Agatha became the inmate of her father's dwelling ; never had she uttered what Lady Matilda had said to her on this subject ; for once when asking questions about her mother, Captain Singleton sternly replied,—

"Did the Abbess of the Convent of the Holy Sisters ever bid you ask me these questions,—tell me, Agatha Singleton, did the Lady Matilda St. Clare bid you ask aught concerning your mother ?"

The manner and look which were now directed toward the gentle but always dignified girl, for a moment made her tremble, for she perceived that her father regarded her with the most scrutinizing attention ; but conscious in the purity of her own heart, and inured to the practice of never deviating from the truth, which she had been ever taught to venerate from the strict example of her able instructress, she quickly recovered from this momentary terror of her father's anger, and with cheeks which glowed not with confusion, but with enthusiasm of the love of candour, and what she considered due to the character of her holy preceptress, she firmly replied,—

"No, Sir, the questions I have asked you were the suggestions of my own heart, and not induced by any offered to me by Lady Matilda St. Clare ; if they are improper ones, as I know not that they are, but if my father deems them so in his child, I will withhold the inquiry I have so naturally but incautiously made ; but I should disdain if I were guilty of a fault to impute it to Lady Matilda St. Clare, or to any other, merely to screen myself from your displeasure ; I would rather, much rather, confess that fault to a

kind, indulgent father, and hope forgiveness from him alone; breathed from your lips, I might bear chastisement, but I could not so well support it from the lips of another; tell me then, has Agatha offended her father by this confession?—for I have told you truth, Sir, it was the first lesson imprinted on my youthful mind, by her whom you appointed to be my preceptress, it was the Abbess who bade me love truth, and I shall ever hallow it.”

A tear, sacred to the virtues of the ever loved and pious Lady Matilda, bedewed the dark but brilliant eyes of Agatha as she uttered this ingenuous speech, while the emotions of Captain Singleton were almost uncontrollable, as he gazed wildly in the face of his lovely daughter; but softened was every passion there, save only those of love and tenderness toward her, and in a voice at once mournful, and strongly marked with tremulous agitations, he thus addressed her:—

“And well has your preceptress performed her task, my sweet, accomplished, amiable and ingenuous child! for she has brought you to my arms the semblance of her own perfect and matchless excellence, and you are Matilda in all but her vows;—ah, fatal vows! but yet most just for all this;—I have merited from Matilda St Clare,—she was—she is—she will be——” Captain Singleton paused, heaved a bitter sigh, and suddenly became abstracted into silence.

But youth, fresh, glowing, innocent youth, unconscious of the cause of these sudden starts of passion, are dissatisfied till they know from whence they proceed; they see only the rose, but do not see the canker that destroys it; while they are pleased with the colour and smell of its odour, they cannot imagine that so foul a thing as a serpent is enfolded within its fragrant leaves, and Agatha during this short interval of silence, artlessly exclaimed,—

“Tell me, father, what Lady Matilda will be, if indeed you know so well her fate; and yet, I thought, to know the fate of mortals belonged to heaven alone.”

It was the last thought of his heavenly child that perhaps roused to energy the almost torpid feelings of Captain Singleton, and he exclaimed,—

“Matilda’s fate, ah, who shall doubt, who shall question it, she was, she is, and will be an angel!”

" Well, and so I always thought she was," cried Agatha " for she always looked like one when she went to vespers ; and sister Barbara went too, and seemed to pray too as much as Lady Matilda, but, dear me, she looked so cross and so frowning all the while, and was so glad when mass was over to go to dinner, that I cannot think sister Barbara will ever be an angel like unto dear Lady Matilda : angels do not look cross and frowning, and eat so greedily, do they, father ?"

Disposed as Captain Singleton now was to sink into his habitual gloom and melancholy, he could not resist smiling at Agatha's remark.

" Sister Barbara, my love," answered he, " is one of those beings who assume the mask of holy religion only to conceal a corrupted heart ; it may serve her purposes here, but hereafter it will avail her nothing ; and we deceive ourselves when we would deceive Him, whose eye is the searcher of our most secret thoughts, and from whom no secrets can be hidden ; but the sister Barbara is unworthy of our contemplation ; I would direct you, my love, to one of a more important nature ; and as this is the last time, save only one, that I shall enjoin you on the subject, you must implicitly attend to and obey my injunctions ; the questions you have asked about your mother I am not at liberty to resolve, and you must henceforth learn to bear in silence this denial of your most earnest supplication on this subject ; it pains me, my beloved Agatha, to deny your request, but circumstances of a most delicate and peculiar nature render my compliance, even to you, impossible : seek not, therefore, to know that from which I am forbidden, and trust to the better wisdom of an always kind and never erring Providence for future discoveries, and these may one day eventually arrive ; the judgment of Heaven, though slow and almost imperceptible in its approaches, yet, comes to its destined appointment, and never fails to accomplish its design ; the barbed arrow must fall, and point to its intended victims be they ever so distant or wrapt up in their own security ; nor can the wicked escape punishment, though they were enclosed in walls of adamant, or strong steel ; inscrutable Providence will search through all, and force them to surrender for their evil deeds. Thus much, my

child, I dare to unfold ; nay, start not, my gentle girl, not on thy mother will this barbed arrow fall ; she is blameless, her fate was——Agatha, my child, I dare not tell thee what that fate was, nor will you ask it, lest you endanger your father's existence."

"Endanger the existence of my father, oh, rather let me perish first," exclaimed Agatha, "never, never again shall my imprudent curiosity, for such I find it is, urge my father on this unhappy subject, or say more than he is prescribed to do. Oh, never more on my account shall you utter one word contrary to your inclination, to your—since such it is, your duty."

"I am satisfied, fully satisfied, with the excellence of my amiable child," uttered Captain Singleton, considerably affected with this proof of exemplary conduct in his lovely daughter ; "yet one boon I can still bestow on you, the resemblance of your mother's features, Agatha, I bear them in my bosom,—behold them here." Captain Singleton threw open his vest, and suspended by a black ribbon, which was fastened round his neck, disclosed a miniature of a female countenance, of such exquisite loveliness as occasioned the transported Agatha to utter an involuntary shriek, and to experience a sensation as she gazed upon it of the most unutterable delight, which was as quickly followed by a sudden burst of tears.

"And was this my mother?" sobbed out she, "this lovely being, scarcely less beautiful than my own dear Lady Matilda, and was her fate so——"

"Another word and you behold her resemblance for the last time," sternly exclaimed Captain Singleton, instantly concealing the portrait again in his vest.

"Forgive, oh, forgive me, father," cried the still sobbing Agatha, "let me behold it again, and I will never more offend ; but, oh, Lady Matilda ! can I ever forget her words, and at the first glance of that portrait they pierced my heart,—*dear is the babe to the mother*, and oh, I feel at this now throbbing bosom that dear also is the mother to her babe."

Captain Singleton, no longer able to control some sudden conficts which at that moment appeared to engross his whole soul, arose from his chair, and paced the room with considerable emotion ; and waving his hand, bade his daughter instantly to retire,

and leave him at liberty to meditate on his own reflections which at this moment could brook no interruption.

"I have, you know, my love," said he, turning on the lovely creature a look expressive of the mental conflict he was suffering, "a nervous malady which frequently reduces me to the deplorable state you now see; and to which even the presence of my sweet child cannot yield relief, or impart consolation. Retire therefore, my love, and in a few hours I shall be calm again."

"But say not that I have in any degree added to your sufferings, beloved father, or that Agatha leaves you now in anger."

"Let this fond kiss inform you to the contrary," exclaimed Captain Singleton, snatching a hasty but fervent pressure of lips, which, like the half-opening flowers of the dewy morn, breathed of naught but nature's purest sweets.

But never more did Agatha behold the portrait of her mother. She wished, indeed, once more to steal a glance of those bewitching and heavenly features in which she could not trace the slightest resemblance of herself; for the portrait presented the countenance of a female whose complexion was most transcendantly fair, with dark blue eyes, and hair of a beautiful light auburn shade, the latter, particularly, being extremely different to her's, which was nearly black: the nose however was aquiline, and the mouth small and dimpled, and so were Agatha's; yet the expression of the whole countenance in the portrait was more sombre and mournfully placid than that of the beautiful orphan, a variation which might, in a great measure, be attributed to the source of her misfortunes, and to the dark complexion of her fate, which Captain Singleton had assured his daughter was of the most dreadful and melancholy kind; but more of that she never dared to inquire into, as she perceived that it had, of late, greatly added to the depression of his spirits.

It was not therefore till the jewels were presented to her from the hands of her father, with the solemn and particular injunctions they implied, and which was only a few days before the awful catastrophe took place at the Cliff, that she ventured timidly to inquire if those magnificent jewels had belonged to her mother; and stern was the reply of Captain Singleton, as he commanded

her to mention her mother no more, against which command, she had, alas, no opportunity of ever again transgressing ; for, in the interval of a few short days, that father was buried beneath the waves ; and many reflections had since that eventful period occupied the mind of Agatha, relative to the fate of her unfortunate parents, in which it was more than probable that still her mother had the greatest concern, because she imagined that mother to be in existence.

The mysterious manner in which this illustrious lady had chosen a residence in the Cottage on the Cliff, and the introduction of her by the Marchioness ; her concealing her features, and observing that singular and profound silence ; the name of Ellen La Roche being attached to the signature ; and, lastly, the note she had received from her, intimating that her personal interest was blended with her's, all appeared incidents of so extraordinary a kind, that Agatha conceived that the foreign lady could indeed be no other than her unfortunate mother, whose actual existence she believed, and that she was known by some strange coincidence of circumstances to the family of the Marquis of Montault, and hence she learned to account for the mysterious language of the anonymous letters she had received either from Lord Montague or some person well informed of her mother's history and her own.

With a palpitating heart, therefore, our heroine placed her arm under that of her young protector, as they journeyed on towards the Cottage on the Cliff ; and whether Agatha actually trembled, or Wolf thought that she trembled, when they came on the verge of that tremendous steep which had plunged thousands into the perilous ocean that foamed beneath it, we know not, but he halted for a few moments, and looking kindly in her face, softly pronounced,—

“ You are weary, dearest sister ; you are not accustomed to such rugged paths.—Come, we are now in sight of yon Cliff, and will take our leisure ere we reach the Cottage. You tremble, lady, and I feel your heart almost palpitate against mine ; nay, cheer thee, no danger shall encompass thee while thy faithful Wolf is the guardian of thy safety.”

To which Agatha softly replied,—



AGATHA & WOLF, SEIZED BY RUFFIANS.

"Dear boy, I do not fear danger, and yet I own I tremble, but it is not with the sensation of fear, dear Wolf; neither am I weary, so let us on, nor tarry here one moment; I do not like the loneliness of this rude and wild dreary place."

"Then we will leave it lady," uttered Wolf, again taking the arm of Agatha, at the moment that the splashing of an oar, coming fast to the shore, was distinctly heard, something like a small shot fired off.

"Fire-arms!" exclaimed Agatha; "did you not hear it, Wolf?"

"Yes, Lady;" answered he, though in an under tone, as if he did not wish even a whisper to be heard; "Fishermen probably coming to the shore, and informing the pilots by this signal of their approach."

"Nay, they cannot require their aid," cried Agatha; "the winds are hushed, no tempest lowers, and the water is calm and unruffled as a lake."

Wolf made no reply, but gently led Agatha on to a more rapid pace. Meanwhile the splashing of the oar became more distinct, and rude voices accompanied the sound, which the hideous screaming of the wild fowl would have silenced, had not their tone been even more discordant. And the very moment that the boat drew up to the shore, two men, deeply masked, approached Agatha and her youthful guide.

"A good evening to you, fishermen;" uttered Wolf, by way of courtesy, and grasping firm hold of his beauteous charge; but he was immediately saluted by the foremost of them with the following reply.

"A good evening to you, my young gamecock, but you must crow shortly on another dunghill than you have been wont to do, my young mushroom.—Come, resign that pretty morsel of flesh and blood there you have got hanging on your arm to our charge, or we shall charge you with some muskets, that will send you a kicking like a four years old. Come, give up the lady, she belongs to your betters."

"Sooner shall you separate me limb from limb, than part me from her;" uttered Wolf, resolutely and undauntedly: "she is

my sister—dear as the vital blood of my heart.—Look at her, thou canst not harm her, if you are a man : she is a woman, and claims your protection.”

The ruffian staggered a few paces back, regarding the resolute boy with a mixture of contempt, which was evidently blended with surprise, while he exclaimed,—

“ Well, I am not going to harm her that I know of, my young spring-nettle ; nevertheless, she must away with me, do what thou wilt, resistance will avail you nothing ; you are a stout lad, but there are stouter lads here, my boy, that might put thy mettle to the proof, were you to gall them.—Come, lady, let me conduct you to our boat, our Captain is waiting there to receive you.”

The ruffian was now going to seize the passive arm of Agatha, for she had become almost passive from absolute terror, but was violently opposed in this attempt by the vigorous arm of the yet undaunted Wolf.

“ Touch her at your peril, you bold-faced ruffian, vengeance shall pursue you.”

Thy vengeance, my little cockchafer,” cried the miscreant ;
“ Come, that is a good one.”

Another signal was now discharged from the boat, and the other ruffian immediately advancing with a look of the utmost ferocity, pronounced—

“ Hell and fury ! heed you not the Captain’s signal ? What dost stand prating to that young gosling for, Cobbo ? Cleave him to the ground with thy cutlass, and take the girl to the boat ; come, despatch, or bid me do that work for you.”

Till this moment, our lovely heroine had sunk beneath the influence of terror and fear, and was too much shocked to utter one exclamation that could betray her fears to her companion ; but no sooner did she behold the ruffian approaching to seize on the defenceless Wolf, than she uttered an involuntary and fearful shriek that almost pierced the air ; and, throwing herself between the advancing bravo and the unarmed, yet courageous and undaunted Wolf, she firmly, though wildly, exclaimed,—

“ Ferocious men ! yet hold your uplifted arm, that would pierce the bosom of that innocent youth : shed not his blood, as your

Captain (if such you style him) values the existence of Agatha Singleton! If you are placed in authority and power, as I do not doubt but you are, use it like men, and not as butchers. I yield me to your authority, though you have unwarily attacked the most defenceless of human beings—a helpless woman; spare but the life of that boy, and lead me to my fate; I ask no questions, by whose directions you are committing an outrage against all laws both human and divine, suffice it to say, that I am your prisoner, and willingly I go, if that boy escapes unhurt; touch but his life, and you take the life of her whom you now seek—the life of Agatha Singleton; for I will not live if the boy perishes; tell your Captain this;—and I move not hence till you return, and carry me wheresoever you please, I care not if he goes with me.”

The heroic look of Agatha, and the enthusiasm which lighted up her beautiful features at this moment, had even awed to mysterious silence the ferocious men; and whispering to one another, Wolf was released from the rude grasp of the second villain, while the first, drawing his cutlass, stood with it naked over the heads of their victims, till the other ran to receive the further orders of his employer, and returned in a few minutes with the mandate, that the boy's life was to be spared at the intercession of the lady, but that he was to be bound hand and foot, and conducted to the boat with their beauteous charge: but though thankful for this deliverance of her beloved Wolf from certain and inevitable destruction, Agatha, with streaming eyes, beheld his fine limbs shackled by these brutal monsters with fetters, which she implored might be lightly put on, and in no way to give him torture, but to which they answered not a word, though each of them continued in low discourse to exchange sentences with each other; and having finished their cruel occupation, they first led Agatha to the boat, in which there was a man of a gigantic stature and formidable appearance, having a large drawn cutlass at his side, and, in a leather belt, a pair of pistols; but he, like the others, wore a deep mask, so that not a vestige of his countenance was perceptible to human eye: he had a large surtout, made of fur, which he offered for the acceptance of Agatha, and without speaking placed her in the most commodious part of the boat, taking his station beside

her, at the helm, which he in a very adroit manner conducted : and when Wolf was brought, he placed him on the opposite side of his lovely sister, and the men plying their oars, very rapidly bore off from the shore.

Agatha neither spoke, murmured, nor heaved a sigh ; and though faint and almost powerless, from the great energy which only a few moments before had roused her almost to desperation, she now sat absorbed in deep and pious meditation, relying firmly on the protection and interposition of Heaven, to shield her against the secret and invidious enemy who had formed so inhuman and diabolical a plot to effect her ruin. But form conjectures as to who had done so atrocious and lawless an act, she could not at the present moment ; though, it is certain, that more than once, Leontine Craftly crossed her bewildered imagination ; but she tried to suppress the terrific idea that there existed in nature so perfidious and cruel a monster ; she then thought of her protector, the kind-hearted and benevolent father of the tender and affectionate Jessy ; of her faithful Claribelle ; and what anguish they would endure, when they found that she was torn from them by treachery, and perhaps separated from them for ever ; and this last thought, that they would never be informed of her fate, was too much for her weak and now exhausted frame to support, and she would probably have fainted, had not the eyes of her affectionate Wolf been steadfastly fixed on her ; hitherto, by her desire, he had kept himself profoundly quiet, but when he beheld her pale disordered looks, he could no longer be obedient to her commands, and fearfully exclaimed,—

“ I pray you, Sirs, look to the lady, she is fainting ; alas, she will perish. My gentle, lovely sister is unused to such terrors ! I pray you, administer something to her relief.”

“ Not so, Wolf, I am only giddy with the motion of the water,” uttered Agatha, turning on him a beseeching look not to excite by useless murmurs the displeasure of these savage men ; “ nay, I am well, quite well.”

“ Lady, in a few moments you will be in comfort, and in perfect security,” uttered the man who guided the helm : “ in the meanwhile accept of a cordial, which may haply recruit your weak-

ried spirits ; we are not taught to treat you hardly, but for yon forward boy, he must teach his tongue the lesson of silence."

"Nay, he is young," cried Agatha, "a simple youth too, over anxious in his fears for his sister ; I pray you, pardon the boy, and do not chide him."

"Beauty is a potent spell, lady," uttered the helmsman, "and beauty like your's would go nigh to fire another Troy, were there no other Helens."

Agatha disdained to reply to so bold and familiar an address, but civilly declined partaking of one drop of the offered cordial, which was handed for her acceptance.

"For what reason do you reject it, lady ?" inquired the helmsman.

To which Agatha mildly replied,—

"For no other than that I do not like cordials ;" and the apology was apparently satisfactory.

The night was now rapidly advancing, but the moon diffused her bright and silver light on every object that fell beneath her beams, and ah ! what did they manifest to the wretched Agatha ?—ferocious, lawless villians, directed by the agency of some still more cruel, and yet more potent and vindictive spirit, who were bearing her far from friends, from home, from all but the protection of Heaven itself ; but to that heaven she implicitly trusted, and silently offered up a prayer, that she and her fellow-sufferer in misfortune, would yet be preserved from the power of their invidious and relentless foes.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"He that would put his hand
On woman, (except in the way of kindness,)
Is naught but of brute creation :
And to call him man
Were only to degrade the human race."

THE brilliant light which was now reflected from the bright beams of a full moon made it impossible to conceal from the ob-

No. 15. 43

THE COTTAGE ON THE CLIFF.

~~was~~ ~~the~~ ~~near~~ ~~exhausted~~ heroine the ferocious bearing and ~~presence~~ ~~of~~ her companions, whose impenetrable black masks ~~for~~ ~~made~~ them the more terrific to behold. Nor was the man standing at the helm less formidable, although more polished in his language, and apparently their leader in this daring outrage committed on humanity : to have exclaimed against which would, in this moment of her perilous and uncertain destiny, have but increased her sufferings, and availed nothing. At length the boat rowed into a small and narrow creek, situated on the opposite shore ; but how far distant from the coast they had quitted neither Wolf nor Agatha could ascertain, as, the tide being directly in their favour, the men had spared no exertion toward gaining the haven for which the helmsman had steered ; so that when they ceased tugging at their oars they were nearly breathless with the expedition they had made.

" Here you must stop, till it is low water," cried the helmsman. " Fellows, look to your arms, and fire on the instant, if you find that we are pursued. For the lady, and the beardless boy, I will take charge of them at the peril of my life, you need not fear that I will suffer them to escape my vigilance."

Although these words were uttered in low and almost indistinct sentences, both Wolf and Agatha listened to their import, and were conscious that to breathe a murmur of useless sorrow or complaint would be alike unpitied and unavailing.

" Wrap that cloak more firmly round you, lady," said the helmsman ; " the delicacy of your slender form is but ill calculated to endure the chilly coldness of the damp air : we have charge to use you kindly, and so we will. Beshrew me, it were a hint unnecessary from our noble captain ; for they would not be men who could look on so fair a creature and treat her roughly."

" But they would be brutes, would not they, Sir," demanded Wolf, not once removing his eyes from the pale, disordered countenance of the now greatly affrighted Agatha, who felt that she had much rather receive the most contemptuous silence from this man, than be annoyed with any fulsome or disgusting compliment levelled at her person ; and she instinctively shuddered when she reflected how much she was in the power of this lawless, if not fe-

rocious and brutal individual ; the more when, turning fiercely to Wolf, he exclaimed,—

“ I demanded not thy answer, bold, forward stripling: far better did'st thou learn to quell the insolence of that presuming tongue, which seems, in truth, too apt of speech. Wert thou not the brother of yon lovely creature, I should quickly put an end to thy discourse, and should think it meet to silence such a malapert.”

“ Oh ! I implore you not to harm my brother,” faintly ejaculated Agatha. “ Alas, he knows not what he utters in these wild moments. Pardon him, I pray you. A poor defenceless boy is scarcely worth your anger or reproach.”

There was a melodious vibration in the very sound of Agatha's voice, which whether attuned to sprightly mirth or sober sadness, thrilled to the very soul of the object to whom it was addressed : and the helmsman, as he threw out a plank by which they were to be conducted to the shore, had relaxed much of his severity towards Wolf: for, unclasping the fetters which bound his legs and feet, he bade him give them a little exercise before he should quit the vessel, which in a few minutes they should be ready to do.

“ For it is like enough that you may feel a little cramped, boy, with the burden of your chain, which, to say truth, is none of the lightest. There, there, now thou mayest breathe more freely,” added he.

“ Thanks, thanks, a thousand thanks for this relief,” uttered Wolf, now standing upright in the boat, and once more feeling the use of his legs and feet, which had been benumbed with the cold and pressure of the chain that had so long bound them ; and though still his hands were not at liberty, yet he could approach his beloved sister and softly whisper some offerings of condolence in this extremity of their hopeless grief, which before he had no possible means of doing.

“ And oh, you have my thanks too, compassionate man,” uttered Agatha. My poor brother has now less torture from the insupportable pressure of those heavy chains, and he owes this relief to your humanity : once more receive the gratitude of Agatha Singleton.”

Our heroine as she rapidly pronounced these words, had uncon-

sciously placed her hand on the out-stretched arm of the helmsman, and he shrunk (as if with some involuntary sensation,) at the slight touch of a hand, soft and white as the blossom of the pearly thorn while in a smothered voice he repeated :—

“ *My* humanity! *my* compassion! the humanity of a——no matter, you have called it so—and, be it so—it may be so—come, let us depart. I can lead you now in safety over yon plank, and scarcely will the wave stoop to kiss those pretty feet of thine. Come, lady, consign yourself to my care : you tremble.”

“ In truth most sadly,” uttered Agatha, yet endeavouring to soften her fears as much as possible, as the helmsman prepared to take her in his arms. To this he answered in the same smothered tone,—

“ You have naught to fear from *me*, lady, for, by holy rood, I would not harm you ; though my trade is——”

“ Oh, then it is the more noble to possess a giant's strength and not to use it,” cried Agatha, instantly dismissing the alarming apprehensions she had formed of this man ; while, carefully wrapping the fur cloak around her, he carried her safely over the plank to the opposite shore, having desired one of the men to conduct Wolf by the same means immediately to them ; which was no sooner effected, to the great and unbounded transports of both the unhappy sufferers, than the helmsman, telling them to preserve the most profound silence, blew the whistle which was suspended from his leathern belt ; when a carriage and four horses almost instantly appeared in sight, in which both Agatha and Wolf were placed, the helmsman taking his station between them in mysterious silence. It proceeded with the utmost velocity along a desolate, wild and uncultivated country, which appeared to be so little frequented by passing travellers as that no vestige of a human habitation was to be seen.

“ There are refreshments in the carriage if you will now take any, lady,” cried the helmsman, drawing forth a bottle containing wine, and a paper of biscuits, which were deposited in the lower part of the carriage ; “ you will sink if you thus persist in refusing all means of sustenance ; the rejection of which will besides answer no purpose. Here are wine and biscuits ; do both you and your brother now freely partake of them.”

Agatha, indeed, now began to feel the necessity which nature imposed on her, for exhaustion had nearly reduced her to fainting; and she accepted a glass of wine and one of the biscuits which were handed to her by the helmsman, who, administering the same to Wolf, partook of some himself at the request of our heroine; she, feeling considerably revived, timidly ventured to inquire if they had much further to go before they should reach the place of their destination: to which the helmsman replied; (having removed the chain which bound the hands of Wolf with an expression of kindness which seemed the effect of some spontaneous feeling wholly new to him);—

“ You are weary, lady, nor do I wonder at impatience so natural under present circumstances, which do not seem to afford the most pleasing prospects; but in a few moments you will arrive at the end of your journey, where all things are provided for your comfort and accommodation; more it is not in my province to answer you.”

A silence now ensued, not interrupted by either of the party: for Wolf, who, being released from the whole of his fetters, was able to clasp now and then the hand of his beloved and suffering sister, took the precaution not again to excite the displeasure of their conductor, continuing to observe every mark of deference towards him (if such it should be called) till the carriage halted suddenly at the declivity of a steep range of mountains; and almost buried in the midst of them appeared the mouldering ruins of a gothic structure, which might once have been denominated an abbey, the entrance before it yet retaining some curious remains of its ancient form, which rendered evident at the same instant the depredations which the hoary hand of time had been so uncivil as to make on its arched roof and once hallowed walls. Still it seemed to have afforded a shelter to some human being, however desolate or obscure its present ruinous condition; for a smoke seemed to issue from a chimney apparently lately constructed for the purpose of supplying this convenience to the dweller therein.

“ Here then is the old Abbey,” uttered the helmsman in a surly tone, and suddenly assuming his ferocious manner, which for several past hours he had totally abandoned as being either trouble-

some or repellent to his feelings ; “ and here, lady, I deliver up my hostages in trust to our noble captain. Yes, lady ! however unwillingly, I must now resign my charge : yet—but—no matter ! here comes your protector. Lady, farewell ! should we meet again, and perhaps we may, Heaven grant that it may only be to leave you in better company.”

“ Oh ! tell me but your name, that I may learn to remember it with eternal gratitude,” uttered Agatha in breathless accents ; “ and whatever you are, yet I will teach my tongue to bless you.”

“ Then you will teach your tongue to sin against Heaven, lovely lady,” exclaimed the helmsman in a voice agitated and convulsed with emotion : “ for of thy prayers too surely I am unworthy. Once more, farewell ! what I am too soon you will be informed ; and yet I harmed not thee nor this beardless boy, of that I thank the immortal Gods I am innocent : that pang is spared me.”

With these words the helmsman opened wide the door, and sprang out of the carriage ; at the entrance of which, waiting to receive the destined victims of treachery, stood a tall personage, whose countenance, like his dark ambassador’s, was closely hidden by a mask : he was attired in a regimental costume, by the character of which he might be guessed to be of superior rank ; and the following sentences were exchanged between him and the helmsman :—

“ Is every thing secured, and the victim in our power ?” To which the helmsman gruffly replied,—

“ Thinkst thou that I have been treacherous, then, to my trust ? or that Manfreda would do a deed by halves ? I have brought you Agatha Singleton ; make use of your eyes, and you will not mistake your mark. There is none lovelier in creation than she whom I have brought you.”

“ And who is that sitting beside her ?” fiercely demanded the stranger.

“ A boy,” answered the helmsman, “ a beardless, simple boy, for whose life she pleaded : and, by holy rood, I could not deny a boon so asked. We spared the boy, and till now he has been chained. The poor rogue cried me mercy, so I took the fetters off as we journeyed hither. He is the brother of the maiden, at least so she calls him.”

"Fool, dolt, blockhead, why didst thou bring the imp hither? fiercely inquired the other; she has no brother, but yet I know she calls him so, because he was shipwrecked on the night of the tempest with——"

At this moment, Agatha uttered an involuntary shriek of terror, and in the dread of being separated from her dear Wolf, wildly exclaimed,—

"Yes, yes, you have said rightly, he was spared on the night of the tempest; but my father perished there on that fatal Cliff. Oh, you who know so well the misfortunes that have attended the fate of Agatha Singleton, have pity, I implore you, on this helpless youth! spare him, whatever you do with me. I ask no more: do not, do not consign this boy to death!"

"Nay, hear her, Captain," uttered the helmsman in a voice of thunder; "and if not her, hear Manfrida!—spare that boy."

The helmsman, not waiting for a reply, whispered something in the ear of the stranger which seemed to startle him; and, approaching the carriage, he instantly pronounced:—

"Lady be your prayer granted; fear not for the life of the boy—he will be preserved. Come, I will attend you to the Abbey, where both you and he shall find a welcome suited to your station; and where you will also have attendants obedient to your call and subservient to your pleasure. We are no tyrants, lady, though you deem us such: but you will find us men all willing to serve so beauteous a creature."

Agatha felt little disposed to enter into conversation with this stranger, who had seemed only a few minutes before so ferociously inclined to exercise his brutal authority; and, besides the unfavourable impression she had conceived of the natural savageness of his disposition, the terror he had inspired her with on account of her beloved Wolf, though only momentary, had bereft her almost of the power of being able to articulate another sentence; so that feeling too weak and exhausted to reply, she permitted him to take her now passive hand, and to lead her to the dark entrance of what in reality had more the appearance of a tomb than an Abbey, without making the slightest observation on the dreary and frightful abode to which he was conducting her: besides, she

had the arm of Wolf on the other side ; the helmsman, or otherwise Manfrida, having from the moment that they had quitted the carriage suddenly disappeared. Her conductor, after having traversed many winding passages, at last brought her to a spacious hall ; but faintly lighted by the feeble rays of a glimmering lamp, that only, as it were, seemed to render darkness the more visible, and every surrounding object but the more gloomy in appearance ; while a damp and almost obnoxious vapour rested on the mouldy-framed oaken chairs, and issued from the dreary walls.

He rang a huge bell, hung in the centre of this gloomy apartment ; which, after reverberating a mournful sound, brought an ancient and decrepid female from an adjoining chamber ; and, though age had hitherto never failed to inspire our lovely heroine with veneration and esteem, yet on this old woman she gazed with involuntary terror and even with disgust. Contrasted indeed with her faithful and now, alas, absent Claribelle, the figure of old Mysis was truly not very inviting ; for, added to the prodigious large quantities of Scotch snuff which she had been recently taking, she had a weakness in her eyes which made them look as red as a ferret's, and her dress was neither the most cleanly nor delicate, being one of the Dutch costume.

"Where is Beda ?" exclaimed the stranger. "Why is she not here to wait in attendance on the lady who was expected at the Abbey the whole of the evening ?"

"Oh, by my faith, noble Captain, Beda is exactly where she ought to be," rejoined the old Jezabel, scowling on Agatha a most envious and malignant glance. "Truly she has been preparing supper in the green-dragon chamber for these three hours and a half, for the accommodation of that lady, and sure she has been putting all things to rights for her reception in the old Abbey, wiping the stains out of the old tapestry and the bed-hangings and the mouldy chairs ; which, Lord preserve us, I dared not touch, for fear of the rats, which would have devoured me at the first morsel."

"And a delicate morsel they were like to have had, if they had devoured thee," cried the stranger, affecting to put an air of pleasantry on the old woman's uncomfortable words : "but prithee .

have done prating, you mumbling old fool," added he, "and send Beda hither to attend her mistress."

The old woman instantly disappeared, saluting Agatna with another scowl far more malignant than the former one; and leaving our heroine a prey to the most dreadful apprehensions, in this dreary and terrific abode and in the power of beings so repugnant to her feelings: but this was not a moment the most seasonable to reflect on the horrors of her situation, or to conjecture who had been the author of her present misery; nor did she permit her thoughts, bewildered and unconnected as they now were, to dwell for an instant on her dear, loved protector (the Fisher Blust) and the comforts she had enjoyed beneath his friendly and hospitable roof; much less could she bear to think of the sweet Jessy, whose gentle heart was now bleeding on her account; and if she thought of Olive, it was only to remember the peculiarity of her manner at their last meeting, and the malignant glances she had bestowed on her when she bade her farewell: something like suspicion indeed arose in her mind, that this cruel and treacherous girl could be no stranger to the calamitous destiny which was so shortly to overtake her; and in which, were that really the case, Leontine Craftily might now be taking an active part; nay perhaps had principally designed this cruel and diabolical scheme to snatch her from the home and bosom of her generous and benevolent protector, in order to lay a more certain plan for the ruin of his house and family! and if so, how base a fiend must Olive Blust be; for none but the spirit of a fiend could induce her to join in such a conspiracy, and abet such a cruel purpose exercised on one of her own defenceless sex.

"But oh, it cannot be," again reflected Agatha. "There is not to be found in the semblance of woman a heart capable of such unexampled depravity!" and she endeavoured to dismiss so base a suspicion from her tortured mind, and to apply that remedy which even the most wretched and unfortunate have still in their power; a consolation of which she well knew that no mortal means could deprive her; namely—her unceasing confidence in the goodness of a supreme Being, who could in the moment of the bitterest calamity befriend her when every other hope was aban-

doned. He could counteract all evil designs, and avert the cruel and vindictive malice of her foes, which she had not provoked by any unseemly action of her own: conscious, therefore, of innocence, she now looked upward for support in this unexpected change of fortune. Her quick, intelligent, and energetic mind now grasped, as its choicest treasure, all that extensive knowledge which she had obtained from her excellent preceptress, whose lessons had formed her infant heart, and instilled those principles of early piety which were never afterward to be erased from her memory: this knowledge was now the rock to which her exhausted spirits clung. More enfeebled therefore by the bodily fatigue she had endured for the few last successive hours than overpowered by the terrors of her present situation, she sat with her arm reclining on the back of a sort of old tapestry screen, which was placed round a large fire stove, but in which there was so small a portion of fuel as scarcely to answer the end for which it was intended, no warmth being diffused around to the gloomy objects on which it so parsimoniously shed its light.

"I fear that you are suffering much from the coldness and dampness of this apartment," said the stranger: "indeed, I much wonder that by this time better means have not been resorted to for your further convenience and accommodation; but I will myself see to it, Lady, and before I depart will order all things for your future comfort. The old Abbey is in truth most deplorably neglected, though once the seat of splendour and magnificence almost unrivalled, and surely never surpassed."

"But of which it retains no vestige that I have yet beheld," uttered Agatha, by no means willing to let this man see that her spirits had sunk under the conflicts she endured, or that she was yet intimidated by the approaching terrors which might probably still be in reserve for her.

There was also a native dignity about Agatha Singleton which seemed only to belong to exalted rank, and which was so perfectly natural to her, that it could never be mistaken for pride; it was rather the effect of a polished education, refined by principle and rendered amiable by piety.

Whether the stranger was struck with admiration, or awed into respect, by this unexpected display of graceful self-possession in the character and manners of our lovely heroine, is not certain; but after having preserved a profound silence for some moments, during which time he seemed to be minutely examining every lineament of her beautiful countenance, he suddenly exclaimed,—

“ You have courage, admirable courage, which I never yet saw equalled in so young a lady.”

To which Agatha modestly replied,—

“ Do you then imagine that courage is incompatible with youth ?”

“ No more than wit and spirit are with beauty, lady,” he replied, “ but they are scarce ; yet, once found, are exquisite ; as the rich jewel when discovered in a hidden mine, they cannot be too greatly valued.”

Agatha chose not to regard this compliment as intended for herself, nor wished it to be imagined that she considered it in that light, by one of whose principles and character it was morally impossible that she could form any favourable impression.

No answer was therefore made to his remark ; and in a few minutes the younger abigail appeared with a low and modest curtsy, which she took care should be particularly made to Agatha, informing her that the refreshments were ready in the green-dragon, and the chamber to which she was to be conducted quite prepared for her reception.

“ And truly you have taken a tolerably decent time in preparing it,” observed the stranger with a menacing frown ; “ why was it not ready when this lady arrived ?”

The girl blushed deeply, and appeared evidently embarrassed by the inquiry : at length she replied :—

“ I cry you mercy, Sir, if I have been in fault ; but it was not I who was ordered to prepare the apartments for a female prisoner.” The stranger looked at her fiercely, and she concluded her sentence with—“ a female *visitor*, Sir, I meant to say : I did not mean that this lady was—”

“ Silence, you silly noddle !” cried the man, “ and attend only to the commands which this lady thinks proper to impose on you.”

The poor girl seemed frightened ; and gave Agatha a look of so beseeching a nature, that she was at no loss to understand its import, and immediately exclaimed :—

“ Necessity then requires, Sir, that I should now impose one which I can no longer dispense with. I am exhausted with fatigue, and must beg permission instantly to retire to the chamber which is provided for me. I am absolutely in want of rest, and must repose awhile, or perish under the severity of my sufferings : and my poor brother—I implore you to grant him a similar indulgence.”

“ Nor shall you ask that boon and be denied it, lady !” cried the stranger. “ Retire with yonder female, who will be obedient to your commands and attentive to your wishes : and in the meanwhile, fear not for your brother, as you are pleased to call him ; and there are few who would not envy him so endearing a title as to claim relationship with thus lovely a sister ! he shall fare well on that account.”

“ I may then rest secure of his being safe under your protection, Sir,” said Agatha, now preparing to follow the attendant, and regarding the agitated Wolf with the deepest and most tender anxiety.

To which the stranger instantly replied :—

“ On the honour of a soldier, madam, which I now pledge sacredly to you, that youth will be in perfect safety, while he remains within the walls of the old Abbey.”

“ I am much beholden to you, Sir,” uttered Agatha, curtsying with an air at once graceful and dignified : “ then, dear Wolf, farewell !”

“ Heaven and holy angels bless and protect my beloved sister,” quivered the lips of the agitated and trembling Wolf, as he pressed the delicate hand which came in contact with his own.

Alas ! the firm, undaunted spirit of this brave and animated youth, which would have endowed him with courage to face a cannon's angry shot without being intimidated at the sound, could only sink at the word farewell, pronounced by the lips of Agatha ; and the grievous, soul-harrowing thought that he might from this parting hour behold her angel form no more caused an involuntary gush of tears to spring from his eyes upon tremulously and faint-

ly murmuring out the last adieu as she quitted the hall. Nor was our heroine less visibly affected. She too feared that she should not be permitted again to see and converse with her dear Wolf: and though she held her handkerchief over her eyes to conceal the agitation of her countenance, yet her convulsed sobs did not fail to reach the ear of her youthful guide, and very probably excited the deepest sympathy in the bosom of the artless girl, for she softly uttered, though looking around her first with the utmost caution,—

“ Dear lady, weep not so, I pray you be comforted. Oh, it grieves me much that I cannot lessen your sorrow; but poor Beda is unhappy too, sweet lady; ah me! they call me little merry Beda, but they know not that I am mirthful only to hide a sad, sad heart.”

“ So young, and has sorrow yet found entrance there? cried Agatha.

“ Yes, yes, lady! I was born in sorrow; but hush, hush—my grandmother will hear us, and then she will beat me, and send me to bed without my supper; but I will tell you more of this anon, when you are alone in your chamber.”

“ Poor child;” softly ejaculated Agatha; for the age of Beda did not appear to exceed fifteen, although she was uncommonly full-grown, with a round and rosy face, and large sparkling black eyes, joined to a look almost infantine, from a peculiar artlessness and innocence which marked its expression. Throwing wide open a door which looked into a spacious apartment, far better accommodated with furniture than the one they had quitted, and well lighted up by a large wood fire, she exclaimed,—

“ Here, lady, is your chamber; and the two smaller ones, which you shall see presently, are sleeping-rooms, which are yours and mine; oh, the powers! how briskly the fire burns, and you have need of it, for you appear sadly cold. Yon old hall with those dusty, mouldy hangings, would starve a rat to death. I pray you, dear lady, sit close to the fire, and take off your mantle, meanwhile I will warm you a sup of nice elder wine; grandmother made it and it is marvellous good; I would that grandmother were as good as her wine.”

The whimsicality of this remark actually made our heroine smile

in the very midst of her misfortunes ; and, having followed Beda's direction, she felt cheered by the warmth of the fire, and revived by the kind attention shown to her with such good-humour and simplicity by the unaffected girl. With such a companion, even in this dreary and uncomfortable solitude, Agatha felt that she could be content and even amused ; so much did she prefer it to the probable disgusting, and perhaps disdainful treatment of an attendant of a colder and more frigid age :—and while the youthful Beda was fidgetting about her person one moment, and the next scalding the wine, which she quietly administered to her mistress in a large silver cup, and toasting the biscuits, our heroine secretly rejoiced that the grand-daughter, instead of the grand-mother, whose frightful appearance and uncouth manners still dwelt on her recollection with dismay and terror, had so fortunately been appointed for her *fille-de-chambre*.

“ Here are two delicate pigeons beneath this cover ;” cried Beda, removing it at the same instant, and drawing the table on which it was placed with several more covered dishes close to the side of her lovely mistress ; “ Dear lady, try if you cannot taste a morsel, were it only to please poor little Beda, who is longing to see you eat.”

“ Dear girl, I would please you, were I able ;” cried Agatha, still more gratified with the engaging manners of her little smiling attendant ; “ but I cannot taste food to night. Alas, child, I am more in want of rest ; but I thank you, Beda, for your kind wish to serve me. I will to bed, if you have prepared it, and endeavour to ease my throbbing temples.”

“ Your temples ; ah, do they then ache, lady ?—I will steep a kerchief in Hungary water, and bind them up, and then I will air your night-clothes, and, while you try to sleep, I will sit by the couch and watch you.”

“ Dear girl, I have no other garments than what you behold,” uttered Agatha, bursting into tears ; “ my clothes, my home, my protector, my friends, are all far distant behind me ! but why do I distress you by repeating grievances which you, poor child, have no power to redress.”

“ Would I could, would that Beda had that power, dear lady ;”

cried the kind-hearted girl ; “ but you have clothes, and they are fine clothes too, all placed ready for your use, in the cabinet of your chamber.”

Surprised by intelligence she so little expected, Agatha was on the point of inquiring who had placed them there, but prudence immediately suggested that this moment was not a seasonable one for demanding an elucidation of this circumstance ; indeed, it was more than probable that it was not in the power of the girl to give one ; but Beda having brought the night-clothes, and placed them by the fire, our heroine was still more deeply struck by the delicacy of the material of which they were made ; and, while she was undressing, the girl artlessly exclaimed,—

“ Did I not tell you true, lady ? they are fine clothes, much finer than any I ever beheld before ; and some of the dresses are all covered with lace and with ribbons,—ay, and some of them too are marked with a crown, so prettily !”

“ A crown, Beda ?” rejoined Agatha, starting with involuntary surprise.

“ Yes, indeed, lady,” answered Beda ; grand-mother, when she put her spectacles on to look at it, said it was a coronet, and that she absolutely believed that all these clothes belonged once to some queen or great princess, they are so grand and so fine ! but how they came into the old Abbey I am sure I cannot tell, though I suppose grandmother can tell if she likes, for she knows every thing ; but she won’t tell, she won’t tell any body, if they were dying to know.”

Agatha made no remark on this observation of her little talkative maiden, nor dared she investigate her own thoughts at this moment on so extraordinary and mysterious a circumstance ; for to no person, recently an inhabitant of this Abbey, could such a wardrobe as the one described by little Beda belong. The garments must have been sent hither by some person of illustrious rank who had been in the habit of wearing such costly apparel and once the images of the Marchioness of Montault, and her son, Lord Montague, crossed the bewildered imagination of our now greatly perplexed heroine ; but could Montague have any hand in this nefarious business ? Could he be accessory to the atrocity of

ruffians seizing on her person, and bearing her far from home and friends ; and to the separating her from the only being who protected and had afforded her a shelter in her orphan state ? If Lord Montague had done this, he was the basest of men, and the Marchioness the most treacherous of women. But Agatha repelled a thought so degrading to the character of both these exalted personages ; and Benda, as she drew the curtains gently around her, wished her a good repose, adding softly, " I will watch you, if you please, lady."

To which Agatha replied,

" No, dear girl, retire to your chamber ; for there is an eye that will watch over me in despite of all human power to prevent it.—An eye that slumbers not, though we slumber ; and while the radiance of that eye yet beams upon me, and upon you, sweet innocent, we shall never want protection, nor need to fear an approach of the danger which that eye still overlooks, and can always speedily avert."

CHAPTER XXVII.

" But he that rails against his silent friends,
Or hears them scandalized, and not defends ;"

* * * * *

" Tells tales, and brings his friends in disesteem,
That man's a knave !—Be sure beware of him."

WHETHER that nature was exhausted with fatigue, and worn out with suffering, or that heaven in kindness had lent its pitying aid to befriend the slumbers of its faithful votary, we cannot decide ; but never had the sleep of Agatha Singleton proved more sweet and refreshing than it did beneath the roof of the old Abbey, and in the very midst of the direst calamity which had ever befallen her : affording an incontestible proof, that it is not always in the power of unfeeling man to deprive us of the consolation which we derive from the consciousness of a pure and upright

heart, and from the reflection that whatever our misfortunes may be, we have not brought them down upon our own heads by being guilty of any base or unworthy action. Beda, who had only taken a few short hour's repose on her little pallet in the adjoining chamber, was much surprised to find her lovely mistress still under the influence of a sound sleep when she entered the apartment and gently drew the curtains aside.

"Do not let me disturb you, dearest lady," said she, as Agatha, suddenly awaking, demanded to know who was there?

"It is only Beda, who is waiting here to receive your commands, and who is happy to find that you have been able to rest so well. In truth, I was sadly afraid that the noises which are constantly kept up in this old Abbey would have disturbed you; to me they are nothing; but to you, lady, who can never have heard such noises before, they would have been frightful. I am happy, therefore, that you have escaped them."

It has already been remarked that our heroine possessed no fears, at least no superstitious fears, although educated in a convent; yet we must hesitate to pronounce that she was equally a stranger to the emotions of curiosity; and she eagerly demanded to know of Beda what noises she alluded to, for that she herself had heard nothing to alarm her, but had slept most profoundly ever since the latter had quitted her. The little girl however was not only embarrassed by the inquiry, but seemed decidedly unwilling to give any further explanation on the subject; which Agatha perceiving became no longer anxious to hear; though during the few minutes she was engaged in dressing, she smilingly observed to her little blushing companion:—

"It was wrong of you, my dear child, to mention noises, the causes of which you were not at liberty to reveal; as the mentioning of such thing things might have intimidated one of a less firm spirit than myself, who might be inclined to yield to vain and imaginary terrors in so remote and dreary a dwelling. But I should be to blame to encourage the approach of any idle fears, while I have so much real sorrow to combat with; and do not suppose that I wish to encroach upon your kindness of disposition, or the seeming openness and sincerity of your character, by ask-

ing you for any intelligence about this old Abbey which you are, doubtless, desired not to reveal. The noises you have alluded to are of no consequence to me while they do not threaten me with danger or infect me with fear."

To this the little maiden, shaking her head in a very significant manner, instantly replied :—

"Ah! Lady, you will very shortly hear them, and know also from what cause they proceed; and though you did not hear them last night, perhaps you will this. Oh! yes, you will surely hear them to-night, for there will be great doings in the old Abbey. This is the birth-day of the Captain, and there is a great party invited to supper in the ancient hall. Oh! it was a sad night the last year. I well remember that grandmother and I were almost frightened out of our wits with fear; for, do you know, lady, they all got drunk with wine, and then they quarrelled and fought; and both wine and blood were sprinkled all over the floor; and grandmother verily thought that the Captain had killed one of the smugglers that belonged to the 'Bold Buccaneer.'"

If Agatha had felt no fear at the former intelligence of the little talkative Beda, she actually turned pale at this last communication, and with the most breathless accents exclaimed :—

"Smugglers did you say Beda? Oh! Heaven forbid that I should indeed have been so unfortunate as to have fallen into the hands of smugglers. Alas, dear Wolf! then both your doom and mine is irrevocably fixed."

The terrified Beda quickly replied,—

"Oh, say not so, dear lady, say not so: for though they get their bread upon the high seas, which grandmother says they do, and are very terrible, fierce-looking men, yet methinks they could not harm you, lady."

Agatha was almost too much abstracted in thought and agonized in heart to attend to this last observation of her little attendant, and she permitted her to prattle on, and even to prepare her breakfast; to which she mechanically sat down without the slightest inclination to eat of the delicacies which were offered to her taste, and without once remarking the agitation of Beda, who mournfully exclaimed :—

"Ah lady! you eat not, and you speak not. Ah, wherefore are you offended with poor little Beda, who would do any thing to make you smile, and see you happy! I would I could recal my words, since they have made you grieve so sadly; but indeed, I knew not that they were of evil import.

Both the look and manner of Beda were so perfectly replete with purity and simplicity, and withal so affectionate, that Agatha could no longer disregard her attentions; and, extending her hand towards the artless girl, with her wonted sweetness exclaimed:—

"Dear girl, you have said nothing that can at all make me feel angry with you, whatever import your words may have conveyed: and I admit that they have filled me with terror and apprehension which I cannot at the present moment banish. Yet the evil is not of your making, sweet girl. It cannot spring from you; therefore with you I cannot be offended or displeased, because you have only uttered truths, although they are unpleasing ones! satisfy me but in one particular, and I will make no further inquiries, to answer which may be contrary to your injunctions. Was that the Captain who conducted me hither on yesternight, and from whom I parted?"

To which Beda, after a moment's hesitation replied,—

"He?—oh no, lady! I should be sorry if he were: for he is a very surly cross sort of a man indeed; even grandmother is almost afraid of him; for, though he smiled upon you, he has a frown for every body else. He is second in command under the Captain, so we are all obliged to treat him with respect, whether we like it or not: which is very hard, because, lady, it is not easy to esteem those for whom we can feel nothing but terror and disgust. Then, Mr. Hasrac is so brutal to the poor men on board of the Bold Buccaneer, and orders them to be flogged and punished when there is no occasion for such acts of cruelty; so there is no wonder that they cannot endure the sight of Hasrac, is there, lady?"

"No, child," answered Agatha: "the wonder would only be if they could endure the sight of him, since they groan so much beneath the tyranny of his power. Tyrants may indeed be dreaded; but for them to be liked is a moral impossibility. Conceiv-

ing that she might yet gain some further intelligence from her little waiting-maid that might tend to throw a clear light on the mystery of her present confinement, during the interval of Beda's employment in removing the breakfast things from the apartment, she suddenly exclaimed, endeavouring to force a smile into her care-worn countenance :—

“ So, Hasrac is not likely to be enrolled in your good graces Beda ! but the Captain is, I imagine, of a more kindly nature ; gentle, perhaps, and more humane to the poor fellows under his command.”

To which Beda answered, with a rising blush, which made her arch and pretty features a thousand times more bewitching :—

“ Yes, lady, he is quiet enough ! and would seldom speak to any one, if they were not to speak to him. But though so silent, he is not gentle ; he does things very roughly sometimes, without being once in a passion. It was the Captain, as I was saying before, that almost killed one of the men : but, dear me, he did it very coolly and quietly ; no one would ever have thought that he had been so angry.”

“ Then he is by far the most dangerous character of the two,” cried Agatha, shocked by this description of the man who appeared to be the principal of this place, and by whose means there was no doubt but she had been conveyed hither under the guard of his wicked agents in so nefarious a transaction. “ Yes, Beda, the cold-blooded tyrant is even worse than Hasrac, who drops the mask and plainly tells you what he is, a bold-faced villain. Oh, may Heaven protect me from the power of such a monster, who, with deliberate malice and calm composure, can do an act so disgraceful to humanity. I would rather stand exposed to an hungry lion's vengeance, or meet, unkennelled in my path, a furious blood-bound, than encounter this quiet, silent man that you describe, Beda ! know you this Captain's name, child ? the very sound of which, I fear, will soon, ah ! very soon become hateful to my ear.”

“ Then I rejoice that it is quite out of my power to tell you, dearest lady,” uttered the girl : “ for indeed, indeed, I do not know it. He goes by the name of *the Captain* in the old Abbey, and nobody calls him by any other.”

"Is he young or old?" inquired our heroine most anxiously, for strange thoughts at that moment possessed her now bewildered imagination; and had Beda pronounced the name of Craftly, she would in no degree have been surprised at the intelligence that this artful and insidious villain had been the means of carrying her away from the power of her protector.

But the little girl very soon replied:—

"Old, lady! old enough to be my father or yours! and he is very ugly too. Nobody would fall in love with him for his beauty! yet grandmother says that he has once been handsome; but, my gracious, it must have been a great, great while ago, when handsome men, I suppose, were very scarce."

At any other moment Agatha would have smiled at the arch pleasantry of her little abigail: but she was now too much agitated and interested in all the information she could gain respecting this man; and she exclaimed:—

"Your grandmother then has been acquainted with the Captain a considerable length of time?"

"Yes, lady," answered Beda, "in foreign parts, when she was in her own country, which is also the Captain's: they are both of the same country, and that I suppose is the reason why they are so partial to one another."

"And what country might that be?" inquired Agatha.

"Italy, lady," cried the little girl, smiling, "a very perfidious country I have heard, where the gentlemen are all jealous—and the ladies very fond of making them so."

"And who has taught you to credit this report?" said Agatha.

Beda archly replied,—“Why grandmother—and—and—somebody besides, to whose report I would give credit in any thing.”

The little rosy cheeks of the smiling Beda were now tinged with a brighter glow: and her lively black eyes had lost nothing of their lustre the while she was making this perfectly artless declaration.

But as the *somebody* was of no consequence to Agatha, though she clearly perceived had great influence with her *fille-de-chambre*, she did not press her for a further disclosure of the secrets of her young and innocent bosom, which would too soon arrive at suffi-

cient maturity to discover, that men are not always what they seem; and truth and sincerity not always the language of their heart, though it dwells on the glossy surface of their tongue.

Nor were the communications afforded her by Beda of a very pleasing nature to occupy her present thoughts; or the idea of the old grandmother and the Captain being natives of Italy any points in their favour: for the only being she had ever known as coming from that country had indeed been perfidious even to the very worst extreme, having betrayed his trust and committed a most daring outrage on the property of his employer; and that being was the dark mysterious Paulo! the very recollection of whom, and of his being also an Italian, made her tremble with terror at the idea of an encounter with any more natives of that country, for which she had as little respect as Beda; and it was strange that her greatly venerated and highly respected father should have selected such a man as Paulo for his confidential servant, as his manners were unquestionably of the most repellent and disagreeable kind: for he could not merely be termed gloomy or reserved, but decidedly morose, shunning the society of his fellow-beings as if they were hateful to his sight!

And of such a man who would not have been beware? He who is so apt to suspect others is generally to be the most suspected himself; for "suspicion ever haunts the guilty mind." But there were other contradictory points in the conduct of her father; which, however dearly he was loved by his affectionate and dutiful child, could not escape her clear, intelligent mind, and accurate observation; and which even her partiality for that father could not exactly reconcile to common sense. For instance, his having himself abandoned all intercourse with mankind, and yielded to an indulgence of the most depressed habits of manner and reflection; for which he had never assigned to his daughter one probable cause: while the uncertainty of her mother's yet being in existence often filled the mind of Agatha with perplex and torturing doubts, whether she was actually the legitimate offspring of her parents, or the child only of illicit love:—a question regarding which her unfortunate father had still left her in doubt, and in that doubt it was probable that she would remain to the end of her existence.

These were the sad and painful reflections in addition to her present misfortunes, in which our heroine was involved at the departure of her little attendant from the apartment; who had left her freely to indulge them, in which she was not interrupted till dinner time. It was during the absence of Beda that Agatha more carefully examined the situation of the gloomy abode in which she was now likely to become a prisoner—perhaps for life, for any thing she could tell to the contrary. Poor Wolf, too, was as likely to share the horrors of her fate; and for him she grieved more than for herself, because it was his attachment and fidelity toward her that had so suddenly involved him in this new and unforeseen calamity; and she would have given worlds only to have obtained one glance of the dear, loved companion in her misfortunes, and to hear from his own lips that he was not suffering any hardship from the tyranny of their cruel oppressors. But as this wish was unavailing at the present moment, Agatha endeavoured to chase it from her already too greatly perturbed mind.

The hangings of this apartment were of tapestry, and exceedingly well appropriated to the name which was given to it of the *green-dragon*, which animal was accurately represented, in various directions. The chairs and sofas were of crimson velvet, not so much out of repair as might have been expected from the otherwise ruinous and mouldering appearance of the rest of the furniture in this ancient building. A large lamp hung in the centre, which, when lighted, had as brilliant an effect as on the night before. But the most remarkable thing which attracted the observation of Agatha was the stupendous height which this apartment appeared to be from the ground; and the darkness of the windows, which, nearly covered with moss, and overshadowed with ivy, scarce admitted a ray of light to ascertain whether it was night or day; and on which the genial warmth of the solar beam never yet seemed to have shed its kindly influence, to invigorate or enliven those within.

When the winds ceased to whistle, and all was hushed for a moment to silence, Agatha imagined at distant intervals that she could distinguish the sound of waters, laving the sides, as it were, of rocks which did not appear to be situated at any considerable

distance from the walls of the old Abbey; and when her little abigail again made her appearance to cover the table for dinner, the first question her mistress asked of her was, if they were near the main ocean: to which Beda replied,—

“Oh dear, lady! as if you did not know that! why to be sure we are; and whenever there is a tempest, you would be frightened to death to hear how the winds roar, and how the waves dash against the sides of the rocks. Grandmother and I have often thought that the walls of the old Abbey would fairly fall down and tumble about our ears, when we have been in bed and fast asleep.”

“Yet your fears, Beda, did not, it seems, prevent you from enjoying your usual repose,” cried Agatha, with a smile.

“No, lady,” answered the little girl, “for I always said my prayers before I went to sleep, though I never heard grandmother say hers. But grandmother’s religion is quite different to mine; she wants a parcel of beads that hang by her side, and prays to them, while I am taught to worship no earthly thing. Am I right, lady?”

“Unquestionably so,” replied Agatha, “and your grandmother may be right too in the service of her religious duties as well as you, if her devotion be but sincere. If the heart be offered up to the Throne of Grace, pure and fervent and humble in spirit, the mode in which we offer it is doubtless accepted, let our religion be whatever it may. It can in that case never teach us to do wrong, and by that let us be directed.”

“So, Lady, you did not know that we were so near the high seas,” cried Beda, “which on a clear sunshiny day you may see from the Abbey windows.”

“Then I imagine they are not the windows of this apartment,” answered Agatha, “which are so perfectly shaded by the moss and the ivy that there is scarce a peep-hole through which you can discern any object, be it ever so near; and from which the very sun appears to be shut out from all mortal gaze.”

“No, lady, I did not mean these windows: but in a chamber in the east wing of the Abbey, which was lately occupied by a——” Beda paused and coloured deeply, from a consciousness

that she had unwarily slipt with her tongue, and could not now recal her words: and it was with no small degree of hesitation that she stammered out—a *gentleman*, who is now gone from the Abbey a great, great while ago, and this chamber has been shut up ever since."

"Then my brother and I are not the only beings who have been dragged to this wretched place," uttered Agatha with an involuntary sigh. "Yes, I remember that you said something about a *prisoner* in the presence of Hasrac yesternight, and that he rebuked you for so doing lest I should remark it: but it was vain to hope it might escape my observation; I did remark and shuddered at it, and so did my brother:—do you recollect this, Beda?"

"Yes, lady, I remember what I uttered, which would at any other time have cost me the bastinado," cried Beda; "but you prevented that; but as to the gentleman—I had nothing to do with attending on him save only once, lady, and then I carried in his breakfast, because Manfrida was sick of a fever."

"Manfrida!" exclaimed Agatha, recollecting at this moment that it was the name of the helmsman who had brought her to the Abbey, by whose intercession the life of her beloved Wolf had been spared, and whose dark, mysterious hints respecting the dangerous company she had fallen into were now clearly understood.

"Yes, lady, it was Manfrida who always attended the strange gentleman in the secret chamber," said Beda, "till, poor fellow, he became ill of a fever, and could no longer discharge his duty: and very soon afterward the stranger went away from the Abbey; I know not whither, as he has never since been heard of. But, my gracious, he was the sweetest spoken gentleman you ever heard in your born days, lady. Not very old, nor yet very young, but very handsome! something like you, lady! yes, I protest he had a mouth as prettily turned as yours, and his eyes were just as black and sparkling!"

More involved in mystery than ever, our heroine scarcely attended to this remark of her prattling companion, although, had she seriously reflected thereon, it must have struck her as being singular enough.

But Agatha was torn by the most agonizing thoughts on the horrors of her present situation, unable to judge of the fate of the victims who it appeared were constantly brought to this place by these desperate men, either for plunder or to answer some yet more brutal purpose ! and the uncertainty of what yet might be in reserve for her in such an infernal den produced an internal agitation which greatly disturbed the serenity of her beautiful features. Scarcely touching a morsel of the delicacies which were spread before her by her little maid, she pleaded a violent head-ache as a pretext for choosing to partake so little of this rich and luxurious repast ; for there was every thing that could tempt the appetite in various forms, including some excellent foreign fruit, which Beda assured her lovely mistress the Captain himself had procured for her, saying at the same time that he had kindly inquired after her health that morning. " And what is more, lady, Hasrac, who has the charge of the young gentleman whom you call your brother, bade me tell you that he is quite well, and eats and drinks with a prodigious appetite. Ah, would to Heaven I could make the same report of you, dear lady !"

" Oh, I shall do better in time," cried Agatha, feeling transported at receiving this account of her darling Wolf ; " while my brother eats so cheerfully, and is so well as Hasrac reports him, I am content to bear the frowns of fortune with a better grace than I did before, Beda. Come, you shall show me the beautiful wardrobe you were speaking of last night : it is necessary that I should change my apparel, were it only for the sake of decency."

It is true that our heroine actually stood in need of some change in her attire, which was strangely disordered and even soiled since she quitted the house of her protector. Her journey both by sea and land had by no means improved its appearance ; for, in compliment to her illustrious tenant, whom she believed she was going to visit that evening in the Cottage on the Cliff, Agatha had put on a white muslin robe, similar to the one she had so generously given to the ungrateful Olive Blust ; in addition to which, she had thrown a transparent black lace scarf over her shoulders, and the whole of her dress was correspondent with the same : therefore, being so simply elegant and light, it was not much adapted to the

purposes of travelling, still less to keep out wind and weather, to which she was afterwards for many successive hours so suddenly exposed ; this had induced the helmsman to offer for her accommodation the aid of a large watch-cloak, warmly lined with fur, which Agatha had accepted from mere necessity rather than choice, to defend her from the chilly mist which then hung over the surface of the ocean.

An act of necessity, therefore, is left without alternative ; and she was induced from the same motive to change her attire to one more cleanly than that she had on : but what was her surprise when Beda, unlocking the cabinet, disclosed to her view dresses of the most costly and beautiful workmanship, ornamented with trimmings either of lace or pearls, which it was evident must have belonged to a female of her own size and stature, and certainly had never been made for the Marchioness of Montault or her daughter, the Lady Lavinia ; and Agatha actually blushed and repented that ever a thought had arisen in her mind derogatory to the character and principles of the mother of Lord Montague. The linen too was of the most superior quality, and marked with a ducal coronet.

" There now, was not my grandmother right, dearest lady ?" cried the sprightly Beda ; selecting by Agatha's desire one of the plainest and least costly dresses in the whole wardrobe, which was of French grey silk ornamented with black velvet. " Here is the pretty crown I told you of, which grandmother calls a coronet ; being, I suppose, as much as to say that all these fine clothes once belonged to some great Princess, don't you think so, lady ?"

To which our heroine replied :—

" I am of opinion that they must have been the property of some personage of exalted rank, but certainly not of a Princess, Beda."

" Well but, dear lady, what a nice shape she must have had," uttered Beda, as she assisted Agatha to dress ; just exactly like yours, which is the most beautiful I ever beheld ! and then the colour is so becoming to your complexion ! ah ! I don't wonder when Hasrac told the Captain what a beautiful creature you were ! and the Captain said——"

"I don't want to hear what the Captain said," somewhat pettishly answered Agatha: "nor will I allow you, Beda, to flatter me. It is a language that I utterly despise, for I have never been taught to value myself for any personal qualifications that I may possess; I may soon die, and then all these beauties, as you call them, will surely perish."

"But they are very pretty while they last, for all that," cried Beda, confining the long flowing tresses of her lovely mistress with a silver comb which she had taken, with other ornaments, out of the cabinet. "Shall I braid your hair, lady?" but to this proposal Agatha objected: and being now completely arrayed in her borrowed plumes, she returned to the green-dragon chamber with a more collected mind than might be imagined from the terrors of her situation and the perils which surrounded her.

Meanwhile her little abigail was very active in preparing some coffee at an early hour, in hopes that it might remove the pain in her head of which Agatha had so heavily complained; and certainly the attentions of this good-humoured and obliging girl were not wholly thrown away on such a disposition as that of our lovely heroine, whose heart was moulded to the sweetest tone of sensibility, and never ungrateful for any kindness bestowed: with a smile of the most affable condescension she thanked Beda repeatedly for her endeavour, by every means in her power, to render her dreary abode less irksome; "but alas, my sweet child, I have nothing more than thanks to offer you in return for all your attentions towards me," uttered our heroine with a deep sigh. "To reward you more liberally I am now utterly deprived of the means. Ah! should a day yet arrive when I may escape from the walls of this prison; should it please Heaven once again to restore me to liberty, to friends, to home, to protection; then dear little Beda would be remembered by Agatha Singleton."

Tears instantly started into the eyes of Beda, and the whole of her pretty round dimpled face changed to an expression in which hope and despair seemed alternately blended: and she mournfully exclaimed:—

"Ah! Lady, and would you take poor little Beda along with you, should you indeed quit the walls of this terrible old Abbey?"

would you really let Beda go with you? say that you will, and you will make me so happy! night and day I will pray for your deliverance!"

The affectionate girl had clasped her hands with an energy that perfectly convinced Agatha her professions were without hypocrisy or deceit, and that she had uttered the real sentiments of her youthful heart; and she answered in the following terms:—

"If this assurance only is wanting to make you happy, dear Beda, however far distant that day may now be which shall restore me to happiness and liberty, I solemnly promise that you shall be the companion of my journey hence if it is really your wish to place yourself under my protection; but will you feel no regret in parting with your dear grandmother, Beda?"

"Oh no, no! dear lady!" uttered the little girl passionately, "for indeed, indeed, I have no cause to love her: did you know how cruelly she has treated me ever since the day that my poor mother died! she died of a broken heart, lady!"

"And how old were you when your mother died, poor child?" inquired Agatha, feeling at this moment the tenderest concern in the sorrows of the little orphan.

"Alas, lady! I had scarcely numbered ten years," replied the now almost weeping Beda; "and I am not yet fifteen. I knew my mother, for oh! she was a kind one! but I never knew my father; and mother never told me what he was, at which I have often wondered. He was the son of my grandmother, and that is all I know about him. Yet do you know, lady, that the Captain—hush, I must speak softly—for already do I hear voices loud and boisterous in the ancient hall!" and Beda, lowering her voice almost to a whisper, and putting her pretty face close to Agatha's, murmured:—"it is said, lady, that the Captain once loved my poor mother, and that I am *his* child!—yes, indeed, lady! Manfreda, when he was ill of the raging fever that I told you of, and did not know that any body heard him, he used to talk to himself strange things; and one night when he called for a drop of water to cool his parched lips, and I only remained by his bedside, he looked wildly at me, and exclaimed:—"poor wronged offspring of an innocent maid! and art thou the only one that comes

to aid my sufferings? while thy proud, ungrateful father avoids the presence of Manfreda; has then the only spark of gratitude I ever found him possessed of fled from his guilty breast?—But he is a Captain, a noble Captain! who dares to question the honour of the noble Captain? and then, lady, Manfreda grinned and laughed most horribly, for the fever was strong upon him! so I gave him the drink, and left him to slumber. But ah, lady! never to mortal ear, save yours, did I reveal the words that Manfreda uttered on that night. But I have often paused upon them; and wondered whether he had told a tale of truth.”

It was with no small symptoms of concern, and the tenderest sympathy, that Agatha listened to this artless girl, for whose situation she now felt more deeply interested than ever: yet she was by no means willing to encourage Beda to place any great reliance on the wild and incoherent ravings of a poor distracted being, under the influence of a disordered imagination and raging fever; and, after a moment's pause, she exclaimed:—

“Believe him not, dearest child, unless you have stronger evidence of so extraordinary a circumstance than the mere wanderings of a wild, distempered brain! Had Manfreda uttered truths, it is probable that they would long since have been disclosed to you by him who alone had a right to divulge them to you. Besides, a father could not so long conceal his natural feeling for his child!”

At this moment the sound of voices issued from the vaulted roofs below, and mirth and revelry were very plainly distinguishable. The party which was going to meet in festive congratulation, and fully to enjoy their bacchanalian sports, it was pretty evident had already assembled in the ancient hall: a circumstance by no means desirable to the feelings of our agitated and delicate-minded heroine.

But thus situated, and unable either to fly from her misfortunes or to seek redress for her manifold wrongs, she endeavoured patiently to resign herself to her adverse fate, never once losing sight of that confidence which she reposed in a higher power, and which could not be imparted to her by the assistance of mortals! and while offering up a fervent prayer for the safety of her beloved

Wolf, she took her seat by the side of her innocent companion, whose glow of sprightliness sometimes even amused the drooping spirits of her lovely mistress ; and Agatha not only smiled at her youthful pleasantry, but sat down to partake of the coffee which the little maid had so carefully prepared, with an appetite which she had never till now felt, since she had been a constrained inhabitant within the walls of the solitary old Abbey.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

" What should we speak of
When we are as old as you ! when we shall hear
The rain and wind beat dark December, how,
In this our pinching cave, shall we discourse
The freezing hours away ! we have seen nothing
We are beastly-subtle as the fox, for prey :
Like warlike as the wolf, for what we eat :
Our valour is to chase what flies ; our cage
We make a choir, as doth the prison'd bird,
And sing our bondage freely."

As the evening advanced, the sounds of mirth and revelry increased with each merry sound among the boisterous seamen ; and when the circling glass and bumper toast had been many times filled to the health of the noble Captain, success to the Bold Buccaneer and all the hardy crew on board of her was repeatedly drank at the call of the master of the feast : and this jovial merriment was kept up for several successive hours with unabated glee and apparently in the utmost good humour, each man seeming to enjoy the luxuriant banquet, and disposed to be on peaceable and friendly terms with the Captain. Our heroine actually began with her little merry companion by her side to rejoice that this jovial entertainment had been carried on without symptoms of dissatisfaction being manifest in any of the crew ; and that the altercation which had taken place among them the preceding year was in no danger of being repeated this evening. She felt that nothing

would render her gloomy abode more wretched, or the terrors of it more alarming, than hearing any violent quarrel or dissention between these ferocious men : and she smilingly exclaimed to her little maid :—

“ Well, dear Beda, since it is not likely that our apartments will be invaded or explored by any of these gaunt wolves to-night, I do not see why we should sit poring over the midnight taper, merely to listen to such rude discourse ; which, though familiar to them, is extremely disgusting to me, and by no means proper for either you or I to hear. Prepare my chamber then, Beda, and we will retire to rest. All the doors of these chambers have fastenings, have not they, child ?”

To which the little girl replied,—

“ Not one, dear lady, but what an infant’s hand might readily uncloze. There is no security *here* if any one chose to come to harm us. But there is no danger of that, lady ! for the Captain would not permit any human being, save only himself and grandmother, to approach these chambers, you may depend upon it. You need not fear, dear lady. We are safe while the Captain is the officer of the watch, ay, and so we should be were even Manfrida or Hasrac to guard us.”

During these words which had greatly alarmed and surprised our lovely heroine, and completely changed her intention of retiring for the night, Beda had taken the lamp in her hand, and was preparing to open the door of the apartment in which they were now sitting, when Agatha exclaimed :—

“ No, dear child ! sooner will I sit till the morning’s light again dawn upon us, though I were ten times more weary, than retire after the intelligence you have given me. Good Heavens ! am I then in danger of being hourly, nay momentarily, exposed to the rude approach of these ferocious men, without being able to secure myself from their unhallowed gaze ?”

The poor little waiting-maid was silent, and put the lamp in its former situation without being able to articulate a sentence ; for the alarmed and now almost distracted looks of Agatha had perfectly filled her with terrors and apprehensions such as she had never felt before : while the continuance of the noisy and bolster-

ous mirth, to which was added a considerable portion of inebriety, as might very naturally be supposed to have been the result of such a meeting, almost stunned the ears of our gentle heroine and her now timid companion.

"List, lady!" uttered she, as she again took her station by the side of her mistress, after having trimmed the lamp, and placed some more fuel on the fire; "list to the voice of Manfrida, he is in high words with the Captain! Oh, Manfrida is surely drunken with the wine, or he would not dare to wag his tongue so loudly and noisily to the Captain, who is his master."

"But who may be unfit to be invested with such authority," observed Agatha, "and therefore very ill calculated to support the dignity of that character. When men have been so imprudent as to reduce themselves to this beastly situation, and are all drunken together, the king and the cobbler are upon an equality; for the one will commit naturally as many excesses, and exhibit as much folly, as the other."

At this moment the loud voice of Manfrida, who appeared to be in high dispute with one of the party, became not only plainly distinguishable in sound, but in the unguarded sentences he dropt, one of which was the following, which completely aroused the attention of the fear-stricken Agatha, and opened her eyes to all the danger, and nearly all the treachery, of her present situation.

"I say you are a liar, if you pretend to affirm that I have been liberally rewarded in this affair," furiously vociferated Manfrida; "I would not give a curse for your liberality, nor you either, Captain, if you come to that: but Hasrac knows to what extent you carry your liberality to a parcel of poor hungry blood-hounds like us, who are obliged to do your dirty work for you, and are constantly running the risk of our necks while you are taking a comfortable roost on board of the Bold Buccaneer. Yes, Captain Bounce! we have all had a pretty good taste of your *liberality*. Ask Dick Wildfire what you gave him nineteen years ago for sinking the boat with the *lady and her child* under the Cliff! though you were paid so well yourself for that night's work by the——"

The latter part of this sentence was suddenly dropt by the so greatly infuriated speaker in consequence of a low and faltering

voice having interrupted him, and which evidently appeared to have obtained some influence over his irritable feelings, for he presently replied in a more softened accent,—

“ Well, I know that, Captain, and don't want to be hard with you if you will only come to reasonable terms, and let a body have a chance of carrying his pitcher to the well besides yourself. To be sure that affair of the Cliff was as clumsy a piece of business as ever gentlemen of our calling and genteel profession had the misfortune to light upon. Dick had like to have got his discharge from the land of the living, and you, my noble Captain would have been drawn up in flying colours for sending two angels to Heaven before the world was weary of them. Don't you remember the infant, as she clung round the bosom of her mother, when Dick swamped the boat, Captain? it was as like this pretty lass that I brought here the other night to the old Abbey as—but no matter, I won't bring up old grievances! The lady, you know, was preserved—the child saved!—but no thanks to Dick; and a lucky deliverance it was for you, my noble Captain, that the brave arm of Singleton snatched them from a watery grave!”

“ Fiends and furies and pestilence blister your tongue!” exclaimed a voice so familiar to the ear of her to whom it had more than once been addressed in mysterious guise, that Agatha immediately recognised its resemblance to that of the wild and wandering old gipsy, neither at whose prophecy or appearance she had ever felt alarmed, as she had actually believed her to be a maniac, until the night that she had thrown in a letter at the chamber window at Herring Dale: and then she imagined that the whole of it was a stratagem invented by Lord Montague Montault to induce her to enter into a clandestine correspondence on the subject of his passion, which he could not accomplish by any other means. These had been the sentiments of Agatha respecting the mysterious old gipsy, even when Wolf had related his encountering her once on the rocks of Cromer, intimating from her dark and mysterious sayings that she was evil-minded and possessed the power of witchcraft! but Agatha only smiled at the credulity of poor Wolf, and still believed that she was right in her conjectures as to Lord Montague!

But what were her sensations now, on hearing this voice sound beneath the mouldering roof of the old Abbey into which she had been treacherously brought a prisoner ! and what were also her agonized feelings on hearing pronounced by the lips of Manfreda the name of *Singleton*, who had preserved the life of a mother and her child even when sinking in the bosom of the ocean ! Heavenly Powers ! could she be that child, and her mother that being preserved ? If it were so, she was not the daughter of Captain Singleton as she had always been taught to believe :—then who was her father ?—That she might yet learn from these ferocious, lawless men, could she dare to inquire. Deeply struck and almost petrified with the words she had heard, she turned toward Beda with a countenance so pale and ghastly that the affrighted girl imagined she was fainting, and would have uttered a piercing shriek, had not Agatha expressly forbade her to call for any assistance.

“ Dear child, as you value the life and safety of a wretched being toward whom you have already been so kind, remain where you are ; stir not, move not one step, I implore you, from this chamber. Let not those cruel and inflamed men once know that I have heard the words they have this night uttered.—I will wait in silence for my fate, and pray for some interposition of kind Heaven to save me from their wicked power.”

“ Alas, dear lady, they are silent now, and their quarrel is over,” cried Beda, offering her mistress some drops to chafe her throbbing temples. “ But did their words concern you, lady ?”

“ Oh, too much, far too much,” exclaimed Agatha ! “ but hush ! I hear that voice again—how strange, how mysterious !”

“ What voice, dearest lady ?” inquired the little girl, in perfect amazement at the agitation which was now so deeply impressed on each lovely feature of Agatha.

“ The voice of the old gipsy woman ! how comes she here ?” cried Agatha wildly, and hardly knowing what she uttered, still feeling the tears of the affectionate child, who hung over her in the most unutterable anxiety, bedew her face with the warm drops of sympathy, and fearing that her agitated looks and manner had greatly alarmed this innocent and unsuspecting creature, she endeavoured for her sake to subdue her feelings and to recover her

wonted self-possession and energy of character; and taking the cold hand of Beda in her own, for the poor girl trembled excessively, she exclaimed,—

“ Dear Beda, be not alarmed to see me thus, I shall presently recover. I am conscious that I have been asking you a strange, silly question, but no matter—I had forgot what I intended to ask you: I meant to say, to what person does that voice belong which spoke the last in the chamber below?—Who is he?

To which Beda, rejoicing to find that she was getting better, very quickly replied:—

“ That, lady! why it is the Captain! it was he who spoke last, when he was in that terrible passion.”

“ And is that the Captain, Beda?” rejoined our heroine, with a look which again bespoke the wildest agitation, and wonder, and astonishment, not to be described but by those suffering under the same tortured feelings.

“ Yes indeed, dear lady,” cried Beda, “ it is the Captain; but, as I told you before, he is seldom so angry as he was just now; he may not be so angry again for a twelvemonth to come!”

Agatha perfectly shuddered at the thoughts of being this man's prisoner for a twelvemonth to come, and most fervently pronounced:—

“ In a twelvemonth to come, beloved Beda, may I never hear the sound of that voice, to me more hateful than the screech-owl's piercing cry, more discordant than the raven's.”

During this conversation between the mistress and the maid all seemed hushed suddenly to silence in the ancient hall! and either the riotous party had dispersed and broken up from their midnight revels, or, overpowered by the copious draughts they had swallowed, fallen into a deep and profound sleep.

“ Shall I go and peep if the lights are put out?” cried Beda: “ I will but just go to the end of the gallery, dear lady, and return to you immediately.”

“ Go with speed and with the utmost caution, then!” uttered Agatha.

“ Leave me alone for that, dearest lady,” cried the little waiting-maid in a low whisper, and throwing off her slippers she crept

softly to the door, which she had as gently unclosed; but no sooner had she advanced to the middle of the gallery than, fancying she heard a footstep approaching towards her, she was on the point of winging her flight back, when a voice in the softest whisper possible cried, "Hist—gentle maiden, for pity's sake stay yet one moment!"

As the voice had nothing in it terrible, and Beda was unaccustomed to fear, she replied in the same soft whisper,—

"Speak quickly then, I pray you, for I must instantly depart: who art thou, and what dost thou want of Beda?"

"I am Wolf," replied the voice; for it was indeed poor Wolf; "oh take this billet to my dear and precious sister; it is almost blotted with my tears, but she will make it out when you tell her it comes from Wolf! do this, dear girl, and may angels reward you."

"I will do all that you require," uttered Beda; "I would ask how you got hither, but dare not. Farewell! should we be discovered here, it would cost us dearly."

"Manfrida is drunken and sleeps soundly, and all the rest, save only the Captain, have departed from the Abbey," uttered Wolf. "One word more, sweet maiden! tell my sister, that I am not treated hardly, Manfrida is my jailor, and truly he is a kind one."

"I will tell all this to my dear lady," cried Beda, "so save you, gentle Sir, once more farewell!"

The step of Beda was light as the gossamer on beds of violets that just begin to show their purple leaves to morn's first roseate blush! and breathless, with the treasured billet next to her beating heart, she bounded to the chamber of her mistress.

"Thank Heaven you are returned in safety, Beda?" exclaimed our heroine, "but you are strangely fluttered, child. I hope that none of those bears have dared to insult you. Did you encounter any one in the gallery, that you so tremble and shake?"

"If I tremble it is with joy then, dear lady," replied the girl; "and if I have encountered a bear, it is one of the gentlest bears I ever heard of in my born days. A white bear, and a pretty bear too, and look what the bear has given me!" With these words the little girl drew from her bosom the billet, and presented it to

our heroine, who greatly surprised, read the following words from her beloved Wolf.—

“ I know not if this will ever reach your dear hand, my pretty sister, but as this is the night of the banquet, I will watch for an opportunity, when the men are all drunken, as I suppose they will shortly be, of contriving to speak with your little waiting-maid, who appears to be a very good-humoured girl, and deliver this to her care. Don't weep for me, dear sister; because, though I am a prisoner and dare not walk abroad, yet the man who brought us in the boat, and whose name is Manfrida, treats me very kindly, and gives me plenty to eat and to drink; and sometimes he is merry, and laughs and jokes with me: and though he seldom leaves me alone, yet he is often drunken with wine and brandy, of which he takes prodigious quantities, and then he falls fast asleep. But now he is gone to the great feast that is to be given to-night in the ancient hall, in honour of the Captain's birth day: so I lighted on an inkhorn which was full of ink, and in one of the old mouldy drawers I found some pens and a few sheets of paper, and bethought me of writing to you, dear sister.—Manfrida is coming—bless you, bless you, farewell!

“ It was a false alarm, dear sister! Manfrida is not coming: it was only the frightful old witch, that hobbled across the gallery with a lighted taper in her hand, and seems so drunken that she will presently fall down.

“ Sister, I have helped old Mysis upon her legs again, and she gave me a nice pasty for my pains.

“ ‘ Where is good Manfrida, mistress Mysis?’ cried I. ‘ I want to go to rest.’

“ ‘ Then in the name of Heaven go thy ways, child,’ uttered the old woman: ‘ for if you wait for that drunken dog Manfrida to see you to your chamber, you are like to keep watch till the cock is crowing, boy: for they are all lying on the floor as drunken as David's sow. There is not a sober person in the family now but me,—and—and my little granddaughter who is along with the young lady in 'tother part of the Abbey; in the green-dragon-chamber, just at the end of yon gallery. But his thee to

thy roost, boy ! I must away and warm me with a scald drop of brandy, which is all they have left me, with a murrain to them, out of the bonniest cask that ever was broached on board of the *Buccaneer*. Good night to thee, child ; my eyes begin to wink and blear with the frosty air, and a female must needs take care of herself among such a set of drunken swine. Night, Night, my little cock-sparrow.'

"Mysis now hobbled away, dear sister, but left me all the intelligence I wanted ; for I now knew that only the gallery divided us : and there will I watch for the remainder of the night, until I chance to get a sight of the little maid, to carry this to your dear pretty white hands. Angels bless you ! is the unceasing prayer, night and morning, of your faithful—WOLF."

Our heroine was so transported with this unexpected intelligence of her beloved Wolf, and the account he had given of his treatment in the old Abbey, that for moment she forgot the terrors of her own situation, and certainly was unmindful of the eager and watchful looks of little Beda, who for the last quarter of an hour stood by her side, surveying with some degree of youthful impatience the countenance of her lovely mistress, as she devoured the contents of this precious billet ; and finding Agatha profoundly silent, she softly exclaimed :—

"If what I have given you has made you so happy, why is not poor little Beda permitted to partake of your joy, dear lady ? were I so happy, methinks I should delight in telling you what had made me so."

Our heroine actually felt herself blush at the reproach of this affectionate child ; but, nevertheless, felt it necessary to repress this emotion, as well as to discourage a freedom which hereafter (if ever Beda came under her protection,) might prove troublesome in any other situation ; and she somewhat gravely replied :—

"My dear Beda, did the contents of this billet concern you I would read it to you with pleasure : but I am not at liberty to reveal my brother's thoughts, which relate to him and me alone. Yet be assured you will not find him forgetful of this piece of service you have rendered him, nor me ungrateful for the pleasure it has afforded me."

The little girl blushed deeply, cast her beautiful black eyes down with a modest suffusion which even crimsoned her white bosom, and respectfully inquired if she should now attend her to her chamber,—“for it is nearly break of day, dear lady,” said she, “and in half an hour the signal-gun will be fired off from the Bold Buccaneer.”

“Let us then endeavour to take a few hour’s repose, dear Beda, for I am in truth sadly weary. The revels of those boisterous men have almost bewildered me.”

But of sleep our lovely heroine partook only in a slight degree; her short slumbers being always disturbed by the most frightful and hideous dreams:—in one of which she imagined she was still in the house of her protector, at Herring Dale; and the fisher, with his usual pleasant and facetious humour was recounting some jocular tale, when suddenly Olive Blust entered with an infant boy in her arms and implored her (Agatha) to protect it, for it was the child of Leontine Craftly. That the fisher, incensed at this barefaced confession of a shameless daughter, was on the point of aiming a blow at Olive, when she suddenly threw herself between them, and received it in her own heart; and she awoke from this wild and feverish dream with a loud and piercing shriek, which so terrified Beda, that instantly drawing the curtains aside, she exclaimed:—

“Dear lady, for Heaven’s sake what is the matter, and at what are you so dreadfully alarmed?”

“Is all quiet below, child?” cried Agatha, shuddering still at the terrific impression of her fearful dream; “is there no fighting, no quarrelling among the men?”

“Oh dear no, Lady?” cried Beda. “The men are all gone hours ago; and the captain is below at breakfast with grandmother, and your breakfast is ready too: will it please you to rise and take it? but why did you utter so fearful a cry, dear lady? I left you but a half an hour ago in the sweetest sleep imaginable!”

“Ah no, it was far from being sweet, Beda!” cried Agatha; “and it was from a frightful and terrific dream that I so suddenly awoke;—yet it was but a dream, and I will try to think no more of it.”

In a few minutes our heroine arose and quickly dressed herself, but her pale, disordered looks greatly alarmed her little attentive servant : to satisfy whom Agatha drank an additional cup of tea, and helped herself to an extra slice of bread and butter. But she found her spirits on this morning considerably oppressed, and the horrors of her situation and the dreadful uncertainty of her fate rendered every effort ineffectual to chase despondency from her anguished heart.

Even an interview with her jailor, the Captain, as he styled himself, would be more satisfactory to her tortured feelings than the horrible suspense which she laboured under, and which every moment increased ; in short she did not know why she had not an undoubted right to inquire, nay to demand, of this extraordinary personage, by what authority he had brought her to this Abbey, and detained her as his prisoner ; or whether he was acting from his own suggestion or instigated to so outrageous an abuse of all laws human and divine at the suggestion of another. She had not been molested by his presence, it was true, nor treated with any other violence save that of forcibly taking her away from the protection of her friends ; but was not that amply sufficient to justify her demand of an explanation of the motives of such conduct ? Assuredly it was. Calling to her assistance therefore all the firmness and dignity of her native character, she desired Boda, after she had eaten her breakfast, to go to the Captain and say she requested to see him immediately :—" or, if not, *I* will certainly go to him," cried Agatha, with the air of one who felt that in this respect she had a right to command. The little girl looked surprised, but hesitated not a moment to obey her mistress's commands ; and, during her absence, our heroine prayed most fervently that Heaven might arm her with courage and fortitude to address the author of her wrongs with that mild forbearance and dignified modesty which so well becomes the character of woman, and without sinking into puerile weakness or shedding a tear, which would give him an advantage in supposing that she was subdued by the nature of her misfortunes.

At length he appeared, with a deep mask concealing his features, and while the heart of Agatha beat tumultuously high, he

seemed awed and even agitated by her beautiful presence, as she pointed to a chair for him to be seated, with an air of dignity, which now shone conspicuously in every lovely feature.

"Pardon me, Miss Singleton," said he, in a smothered tone, and with an evidently concealed voice, (which notwithstanding was perfectly familiar to the ear of Agatha,) "pardon my reluctance to sit down in the presence of her before whom I have been used to bend with the most servile obedience, and to whom also I have been obliged to adopt similarly submissive language."

"Not always, I should imagine, Sir," cried our heroine, now suddenly recovering her wonted energy, "for you have more than once addressed me in a threatening tone, although in the mysterious disguise of a wandering old gipsy woman! I treated you as a maniac, which I thought you were, and therefore did not regard your exhortations."

"But you had been more wise had you followed them," answered he: "had you listened to the warning voice of that gipsy, your present sufferings, lady, had been spared."

"Be pleased then, Sir, to adopt a plainer language now that disguise is no longer necessary," uttered Agatha; "for while you speak in parables, and wear that mask on your features, I must still believe you to be an impostor."

"Were I to drop this mask you would know me better," answered he with some asperity, "and perhaps the sight of these features would make you turn away in abhorrence, and Agatha Singleton would give me a title yet more degrading than the former. But beware how you insult me, proud girl—the semblance of your accursed father; he whom I ever hated!—he whom I hate still, in spite of the distance of time which has now rolled over us: yet still I hate him."

Agatha had now the utmost difficulty in restraining the most unconquerable points in her character: yet, mindful of her prayer to Heaven to give her fortitude, and of her perilous situation with this mysterious man, after a pause she mildly replied:—

"And for the father's sake would you hate the child that never wronged you? be not so cruel or so unjust, if you value the forgiveness of Heaven in that hour when you shall surely need it."

The masked stranger, or in other words the *Captain*, appeared involuntarily to shrink from so strong an appeal made to his feelings, probably as he felt but ill prepared to parry the attack : faltering certainly in his voice, he rejoined :—

“ With that hour, lady, I alone shall have to combat ; but, hated I the child when I forewarned her of her coming danger ? do I merit her reproach because she heeded not that warning ? have I not sat whole nights, exposed to the tempestuous howling of the winds and the fury of the waves, on the seaboard rocks of Cromer, to prevent the fate of Agatha Singleton ? did I not whisper in the ear of the youth who was the companion of your journey hither the danger that awaited you near the Cottage on the Cliff ;—and did not the boy tell you what the witch had foreboded ? ”

“ Sir,” cried Agatha, in a voice each tone of which seemed to penetrate the stranger, “ I have never been taught to believe in the forebodings of witches, as you call them, and I never will. To have placed any reliance on warnings so given would have been to doubt the protection and goodness of my Creator, by whose hands I was formed and have my being. *Him* only will I *ever* trust, and *Him* only do I fear ! tell me your purpose then, mysterious man ! and fearful as it may be, you will not find my courage falter, even were it to take my life, provided you leave me in possession of what I hold more precious than life itself,—my truth, my integrity, my innocence ! tell me by what authority you detain me your prisoner in this gloomy mansion of despair and terror, and I will cheerfully resign myself to my fate ! ”

The soul-breathing energy with which this was uttered seemed to shake with trepidation even the strong sinewy limbs of the masked stranger, and left him for many minutes without the power of a reply. At length he gained ascendancy over, as it might be imagined, the little sensibility that he possessed, and sternly replied :—

“ And has death no terrors for one so young and so beautiful ? ”

“ Yes, death has terrors for us all ! but oh, how far greater must those terrors be to the guilty, the merciless, and the unjust ! ” heroically pronounced Agatha : “ to me if they seem dreadful, what must they appear to—— ”

"To me;—if at this moment I could harm that angel purity," exclaimed he, "I were a villain then greater than I am now, when I disclose to you the features of——"

"Whom?" uttered Agatha.

"Paulo!" answered he, tearing off his mask at the same instant: "the so long suspected, treacherous, mysterious Paulo! behold him, Miss Singleton!"

The astonishment and horror of our heroine were so powerful as to deprive her of utterance, yet she had the prudence to conceal her terrors, and to hide her disgust at the sight of this monster: at length she faltered out:—

"And why, oh why, Paulo, have you added cruelty to the commission of all your other faults? you bereft me of my father's property, and you have now deprived me of liberty, nay, perhaps you also mean to rob me of life. Tell me only what direful motive (for direful it must surely be,) leads you on to such brutal actions. Did my father injure you so mortally that your hatred thus pursues him beyond the grave, in wreaking your vengeance on his poor orphan maid who never did you harm?"

An icy chillness crept over the heart of Agatha as she spoke, and, in spite of all her boasted resolution to be firm in this hour of terror, a woman's fear rested on her pale cheek, and quivered on her tongue.

But what was her surprise to behold Paulo reduced to the same situation as herself.

"Give me water or I shall faint," feebly articulated he; and Agatha immediately held a goblet to his lips, of which having tasted, he soon revived sufficiently to address her in the following words:—

"Thanks, pattern of nature's purest, sweetest workmanship! thanks to thy exalted virtue that has spared me the bitterest pang that the heart of man could ever know, could ever feel, and which would, indeed, have blasted my future existence! I will not harm thee, dearest maid, nor wound thy spotless virtue, though a thousand Duchesses were to sign my death-warrant. Thou shalt escape free from these prison-walls, pure and uncontaminated as thou camest hither. Let but one unhallowed hand approach thee



FAMIL' MO' HEEL' EDDY VEE' JIMSEY & A SATVA AN' GLED IN

with a rude touch, and I will tear it piecemeal! Yes, let the Duchess sign my death-warrant; she can do it but once, and that may cost the Hellcat dearly. There, there, I breathe more freely now: and that angel smile tells me that Paulo is forgiven."

"As surely as you hope for forgiveness in Heaven, Paulo," uttered Agatha; "yet you have spoken strangely, and, dare I inquire, I would beseech you to give me some explanation of words so mysterious; you spoke of some Duchess; knows she aught of my father or my mother?"

"Alas, sweet maid, she was the destruction of them both, and would have been the destruction of *you*!" answered Paulo.

"Merciful Heaven, and is she still living?" repeated Agatha, in wild and terrified accents: "oh save me, save me, Paulo, from her direful vengeance!"

"I *have* saved you, lady," cried Paulo, "I *will* save you, though it be at the hazard of my own existence, as I did the life of Captain Singleton!"

"Captain Singleton!" exclaimed Agatha, "is he not dead? oh speak, Paulo! did he not perish in the ocean on the night of the tempest? Oh, but ease these racking doubts, did not my father perish when he set sail from the Cottage on the Cliff?"

To which Paulo replied;—

"Captain Singleton did not perish:—but—but—he is *not* thy father, lady—you are not the daughter of Captain Singleton, nor did Paulo rob you of the property of Captain Singleton, part of which you now wear. Those habiliments which now grace that exquisite form were once your mother's, Agatha!"

"My mother's!" exclaimed the wonder-stricken Agatha.

"As truly as they are now yours, lady," answered Paulo: "but I have conversed too freely. I should have left discoveries such as these only to the lips of one who had a better right than I to reveal them to you. In two hours hence I will lead you to him; then shall the beautiful Agatha lay her hand on her spotless breast, and proclaim to the transported Paulo—that she does *not* think him a perfidious villain."

"Oh, I do not, I cannot think you so;" uttered Agatha: "you are already justified in Agatha's opinion. But oh, you have told

me such wonders that I must retire awhile and compose myself, while I breathe forth thanks to Heaven and to you for my deliverance."

"To Heaven be your thanks then paid," replied Paulo, "to me you owe nothing:—have I not confessed that I hate your father?—yet for his child——"

"You will revoke that hatred," exclaimed Agatha in a voice of melody.

"Lady, forbear awhile to press me on that subject," cried Paulo, "time has done nothing—your voice alone could indeed appease my vengeance; for he only that could resist an angel could resist you!"

Paulo now arose, and, carefully replacing his mask, was about to quit the apartment. "Lady," uttered he, "you will presently require the services of Beda. But pray be cautious. She is a mere child. Reveal nothing to her of what has passed between us."

"I will implicitly obey your injunctions," cried Agatha, "do not fear to send the sweet child hither, for dearly do I love her!"

"And do you really love the little sprightly Beda?" exclaimed Paulo, who was apparently much pleased with this intelligence.

"I will one day find means to convince you of it more intelligibly," said our heroine: "Beda is a little treasure, and I know the value of her."

A deep sigh, heaved unconsciously from the breast of Paulo, was the only rejoinder to Agatha's remark, as he bade her farewell.

"In two hours, lady, expect to see me:—or if exceeding the limits of that time, I shall not return before the shades of evening:—and with these words Paulo departed.

But who can give colour to the impression he had left behind him on the mind, on the heart, in the speaking countenance, of our lovely heroine?

Not Titian's vivid glow and lively tints could paint the colour of that lovely cheek! nor the tender Raphael portray the tear of sensibility which trembled in her expressive eye, as, pondering

o'er the many wonders she had been told, she reclined her arm on a table, lost in a sweet yet sometimes sad delirium of thought, which looked "*unutterable things*."

To whom was Paulo about to introduce her? This question began to furnish her with a thousand vague conjectures, all of which might prove visionary when she beheld him!

Was it to Captain Singleton, her so much respected and dearly-loved father, over whose lamented death she had shed many a bitter and sorrowing tear?—or was it to the father which nature had given her?—No, to him it could not be, for Paulo had declared that he was his mortal enemy!

Then who was *the Duchess*? and wherefore was she the object of her vengeance?—she knew but of one Duchess, and that was the lady who was her tenant in the Cottage on the Cliff; and the treacherous note she had received from her, on the evening she quitted the house of her protector, too much favoured this deception.

These were the reflections of Agatha during the short interval that she was left alone; yet the thoughts of being one day emancipated from her lonely prison, and of being certainly secure under the protection of Paulo, gave her transports of the most lively joy; and she wept and laughed by turns when her little maid again returned to the apartment with the dinner-tray.

"Dear lady, I could not come before," cried Beda, setting the covers on the table; "grandmother would not let me, she is very cross to-day, I never saw her so cross before; and she was going to beat me, if the Captain had not that moment come in, but she is afraid of him."

"It is fortunate that she stands in fear of somebody," observed Agatha, in so sprightly a tone, that Beda surveyed her smiling looks with the most unspeakable delight and wonder.

"At what are you so intently gazing, my dear little Beda?" cried Agatha with a smile, and patting her rosy cheek at the same instant.

"Why I can't help looking, and that is the truth of it," returned Beda, "for you have got a colour in your cheeks like roses, and your eyes sparkle like diamonds."

"And I have
 been laughing,
 in the world
 waiting-maid
 repast.

"Appetite for my dinner," cried Agatha, "more than all the roses and diamonds immediately sat down with her little increased vivacity, a comfortable

CHAPTER XXIX.

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SUSPENSE
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of the most tormenting feelings of ex-
 as and our bitterest griefs are interwoven
 and every moment seems either to lag
 speed, the nearer we approach the goal
 the confirmation of our fears.

Evening had gradually advanced, and Paulo
 the impatience and anxiety of our lovely
 parent to the eye of the watchful Bede to

ed she, "you have asked me thrice within
 the time, and I do not know unless you will
 of grandmother. But wherefore are you
 ?"

enduring the intollerable agony of suspense,
 Agatha, "for ere now I expected to have seen

"And know you not, lady, that he is gone forth from the Ab-
 bey on a white palfrey, and may not return again before to-mor-
 row's dawn?" rejoined Bede: "in truth I heard him say so, just
 before he departed hence."

The countenance of our almost despairing heroine at these words
 again brightened into a smile, and she exclaimed:—

"Say'st thou so, dear Bede? then with that assurance I will
 content me. But does he go often on these journeys, and stays
 he long absent?"

"He only went once that I can remember, and then he tarried three days and three nights, and in sooth he was sadly weary when he returned," replied the girl; "and grandmother and he had much talk together; but it was not merry talk, lady, for ever and anon the Captain wept, and grandmother chid him for it: yet still he wept and sighed heavily. But I could never learn the cause of it."

"Nor ever will, probably," said Agatha, "this place is full of mystery! would to Heaven that it were revealed to me, or that I could once behold——" Agatha paused; and, recollecting the caution she had received from Paulo respecting the little girl, blamed herself for her indiscretion, and became absorbed in her own reflections, which were certainly not of the most pleasing kind: for she still doubted and feared, still trembled, and still hoped that the issue of Paulo's visit to her would relieve her of the dreadful anxiety which hung over her fate.

Meanwhile Beda had prepared the coffee in her usual style, and intreated her mistress to partake of it: who, unable to resist the intreaties of the kind and affectionate girl, was just beginning to sip, when a gentle tap at the door announced her expected visitor; for it was indeed Paulo who now made his appearance before her.

"Continue to enjoy your meal, lady," uttered he, "and by no means let me be any interruption; I will sit and warm myself by the good fire which I am glad to see Beda has so well provided for you."

"Will you not also take some coffee?" inquired Agatha; "you are weary, and it will refresh you."

"I should be unable to resist so kind an invitation, lady, even were I not weary," was the reply of Paulo: and a dish of coffee was immediately handed over to him by Beda, at whom he looked and sometimes smiled.

"You have greatly improved since you have had the honour of being in attendance on this lady, Beda," exclaimed he: "and have acquired an art which I never knew you to possess before—that of being silent until you are spoken to: a very useful lesson for a young maid like you."

Beda blushed at receiving so unexpected a compliment from one who had hitherto treated her with so much apparent indifference; while our heroine very warmly commended the sweet pliability of disposition and obliging behaviour of her little waiting-maid, to which Paulo listened with the utmost satisfaction, occasionally glancing toward her looks which betrayed the strong interest he felt in the welfare and happiness of the engaging girl.

At length the tray was removed, and Beda, having placed more fuel on the fire, respectfully retired:—after which a pause of some moments ensued.

“You have doubtless endured much anxiety, till you again beheld me,” observed Paulo.

“Oh, much, much,” replied Agatha; “you cannot conceive what torturing suspense I have suffered in your absence. Every hour has seemed an age, and every minute a tedious lapse of time! but now you are come, I have new life, new hopes, and all my fears are over.”

“Would to heaven that you had no cause for fears,” cried Paulo; “or I, lady, had no cause to remind you of them: but you are not aware of the peril I am now encountering for your sake, and that my very existence is exposed to danger, should I once be suspected of having revealed to you a part of the mystery in which you are involved.”

“Your life, Paulo!” exclaimed Agatha, shocked and surprised by such intelligence; “forbid it heaven, that the life of any one human being should be exposed to danger on my account. Alas, by what mysterious fate is my destiny then so enthralled? that I, who never yet injured mortal, nor ever would touch them with a hand of harm, or crush the living thing beneath my feet, should be so wretched and unhappy as to bring ruin on the heads of all who shelter me! Oh, unriddle this strange, this dreadful mystery, and I will bless you, Paulo, though you tell me that the authors of my being were the veriest monsters ever born! still I will bless thee for the intelligence, though it were to pierce my heart with pangs unutterable. Who was my father, and who my mother?”

“Your mother was an angel, lady,” uttered Paulo; “methinks I see her now, as in that moment when she stood before the holy

altar, arrayed in the bridal vestments which so well became the semblance of unspotted loveliness and truth! She was an humble orphan maid, who had no other dowry save her youthful innocence and beauty; her name was Agatha Delcrusa, a Florentine by birth, but brought to this country by a lady of the most exalted rank, powerful interest, and splendid property; who, taking a fancy to the infantine beauty of the little orphan, determined to educate her, and continue her protectress through life. She did so; and, having no daughter of her own, the exalted lady became passionately fond of the young and beautiful Agatha, then called Miss Delcrusa the fair Florentine; and exquisitely fair she was too, lady; of all the forms that nature ever gave to woman to charm the eyes and heart of man, that of your mother was the most enchanting."

"I know that she was beautiful, for I have seen her portrait," uttered Agatha, with considerable emotion.

"And where, lady, did you behold it?" inquired Paulo, fixing his eyes on her with a peculiar expression. There was but one portrait taken of the inimitable features of the fair Florentine, and that portrait was in the possession of—her—her protectress!—but where did you behold it lady?"

"On the bosom of my father," answered Agatha, sighing deeply; "of my reputed father, he whom I ever loved, ever revered as a father, Captain Singleton! but oh! dwell not on this circumstance, good Paulo! but pray proceed with my mother's history if indeed you are permitted to unfold it."

"I have told you thus far without permission," uttered Paulo; "but mark me, lady! on the peril of my life I dare not reveal more, till you give me a solemn pledge never to betray the confidence reposed in you. You would this night have seen one who could and who would have disclosed all, because he was not bound by the same restrictions:—but I had other employment for him, and have despatched him on a serious embassy which could not be dispensed with; his return was therefore uncertain, and the visit to him deferred."

"Ah, how unfortunate!" exclaimed Agatha.

"You would not think so, lady, did you know the errand on

which he is gone," cried Paulo, "for on that depends your fate with respect to being emancipated from the walls of this old Abbey!—Should one event have taken place since you have been a prisoner here, you are free, lady, to depart on the instant from these dreary confines!"

"Say you so, Paulo?" exclaimed Agatha, whose eyes at this moment evinced the most tender anxiety, and almost swam in tears; "oh for a horse with wings then to speed him on his way! and can'st thou not trust me, Paulo, except by an oath I be bound to secrecy? alas! I have been taught to consider the nature of an oath so sacredly: yet to thee, to Heaven I would swear it—once to be informed of the history of my birth, which never to the ear of mortal would I reveal, would'st thou but tell me: say, wilt thou not trust me, Paulo?—and without an oath thou shalt find me faithful."

"Enough, lady, enough! I am satisfied," answered Paulo, "and with or without an oath am well assured that you will never betray my confidence!—I had arrived at that part of your mother's history, lady, when she had completed her education under the protection of the exalted lady who had fostered her since the days of her infancy: and her fondness for that young and lovely Florentine remained I believe undiminished, while she, as well, continued to merit by the most irreproachable conduct, the many distinguished marks of kindness conferred on her. At length an unexpected event unfortunately turned the tide of affairs into an opposite direction; which was, the arrival of the young Duke from his travels on the continent,—for, mark me, Lady, twice had this high-born woman been wedded; her first husband was the Duke of Braganza, by whom she had issue but one son, who, at his father's decease, of course inherited his splendid possessions and title, while his mother, the duchess, was also most magnificently provided for: but she being at that period still young and beautiful, formed a matrimonial connexion a second time with the Marquis of Montault."

"With the Marquis of Montault!" ejaculated Agatha, turning pale at the same instant, and betraying considerable emotion.

"Yes, lady," replied Paulo, "the father of the present Marquis of Montault was the second husband of the Duchess of Bra-

ganza :—by whom also she had but one son, and the Marquis she has likewise survived many, many years!—the bitterest and the foulest reproach to the name of womankind! but I will on with my tale, lady! and I grieve to say, that truly it is a sad one.”

“ When the young Duke arrived from Florence, I was living in his service, more as a confidential friend than considered by him as serving in a menial capacity. I had the transaction of all his affairs, the private ear to all his secrets, and no one could obtain access to the illustrious Duke of Braganza but through the interest, and at the intercession, of Paulo Michello.

“ Ah! would to Heaven that I had continued to be so honoured, so respected, so esteemed, by my noble master! I had not then fallen, lady, by the base arts of a beautiful and perfidious woman, whose sole aim and proudest wish was to render others as evil-minded and treacherous as herself.”—Paulo struggled to suppress an involuntary and painful sigh :—“ but I will no longer digress,” said he, “ but proceed to inform you that the Duke of Braganza, in whose service I then was, no sooner beheld the young and lovely protégée of his mother, than his heart became captivated with the uncommon beauty of her person and the superior accomplishments of her mind! in short, he so passionately adored her, that it very soon became perceptible to the jealous eyes of his mother, of whom the young Duke was the idol! and it was then that the fair Florentine was to experience, not only a reverse of the smiles of fortune, but to forfeit for ever the good opinion and protection of the Duchess. Perhaps it was not with a willing ear that the lovely Delcrusa listened to declarations of his warm and fervent passion from the lips of the enamoured young Duke; I do not say that it was;—though of all created beings, the Duke of Braganza was the least likely to be beheld with indifference by a woman so endowed with sweetness and sensibility of heart and mind as the fair Delcrusa :—for the person of the young Orlando, who greatly resembled his father both in features and in disposition, was sufficient to have warmed with passion the most cold and insensate breast; and it was very unlikely that he should have pleaded his passion in vain;—notwithstanding which, a rejection was made, by the timid, virtuous maiden, of the splendid overtures she had

at various intervals received without the knowledge of her protectress !

“ At length, however, the lynx-like eyes of the Duchess beheld the mutual flame which subsisted between them ; and, burning with rage and jealousy, she rushed into the chamber of the lovely Delcrusa, on whom she bestowed epithets of the most opprobrious kind ; accusing her of the basest arts, in having ensnared the affections of the young Duke, and forced herself into his presence in order that he might be attracted by the uncommon loveliness of her person. In short, the rage of the Duchess was so great, and the severity of her language so harsh and unfeeling, that it instantly produced the most terrific terrors and direful effects on the feelings of the hapless victim of her cruelty ; who fainted away long before the Duchess had recovered from the violent paroxysm of passion into which she had thrown herself. Turning to one of the attendants, she commanded that ‘ the reptile ’ might be taken from her sight till she had recovered her senses, of which she desired to be informed on the very instant it occurred, that she might devise means to send her back to Florence, and rid herself of a minion who was likely to bring down disgrace and infamy on the heads of her illustrious family.

“ The order was obeyed ; and the insensible Agatha was carried out of the sumptuous chamber which had always been provided for her, and laid on a bed belonging to one of the lowest domestics in the castle of Montault.

“ Now, lady, mark what followed with this dangerously deceptive and artful woman. She had a deep card to play with her son, who had been absent on the day that the altercation took place between her and Delcrusa ; and it was I who disclosed it to him on the very moment of his return.—Yes, lady, I was then high in the confidence of my illustrious master, and in the full enjoyment of all his favours ! for my heart as yet had not been corrupted, nor my understanding perverted, by the artful machinations of the infamous Duchess !

“ ‘ And are you certain that she intends sending Miss Delcrusa to Florence ? ’ uttered his Grace, his countenance undergoing the extremest agitation at the same moment.

"I answered, that I firmly believed such were the Duchess's intentions.

"To which, after a moment's serious pause, he made the following reply :—

" ' She shall repent her hasty and inconsiderate zeal to do me service.—I will marry Miss Delcrusa to-morrow ! and *you*, Michello, shall be witness to my nuptials with this heavenly creature.'

"Lady, I was planet-struck by intelligence I so little expected.

" ' Your Grace marry Miss Delcrusa !' exclaimed I, in the utmost astonishment.

"Perhaps I uttered this somewhat too incautiously, for the Duke, highly offended with my tone and manner, haughtily replied,—

" ' Do *you* presume to question it, Sir ?—why should I not marry Miss Delcrusa, my equal, nay my superior, in all but the paltry considerations of birth and fortune ; and are these to be weighed against merit, talent, unrivalled sweetness of disposition, and beauty most transcendant ? certainly not ! even if the last-mentioned requisite was wanting, I should look upon Miss Delcrusa as a match for a king ! and I am therefore resolved to marry her, as I told you before, to-morrow : and to prevent all disputes with my mother on the subject, to whom I have given a promise that I shall go to Italy, my nuptials with my lovely Agatha shall be solemnized privately. Michello, I shall depend upon your allegiance. As yet I have found you faithful ; prove your fidelity to your master one step further !—speak of this marriage to no one mortal, till you obtain permission from my authority. I have reasons the most potent for present concealment. If I go to Italy as I have promised my mother, I will in the meantime, on the strength of my compliance with her request, make her promise that she will yet retain Agatha under her protection ; on no other terms will I yield to her solicitations, and she would do any thing rather than that I should remain where there is a probability of my seeing my soul's darling !—Now, Michello, you are aware that my brother-in-law, the Marquis of Montault, is married to Lady La-

vinia Mortimer, that they have one son, Montague, to whom I am indeed godfather, and that they at present reside in Italy.—I do not approve of my brother's choice, and in fact always had an insuperable aversion to the Marchioness of Montault : nevertheless, I love my brother-in-law, and will discharge my duty to his boy. I shall visit their chateau, therefore agreeably to the wishes of my mother :—but I will leave you behind, Michello, to inspect the conduct of the Duchess towards my Agatha. You will have a great charge, beware how you betray your trust. On the least outrage committed against my beauteous wife, (as she will then be,) inform me upon the instant ; and I will return immediately, disclose my marriage, and in the face of the whole world, acknowledge Agatha Delcrusa as the wife of Orlando, Duke of Braganza. Now, Michello, you have my directions. You must procure an interview for me with Agatha to-night ! bribery will accomplish the means ! gold will purchase any thing—use it liberally : I need not tell you how, you have wit and impudence, which will both assist you in the undertaking I have assigned you. Be but faithful, and you need not fear of receiving the best services of Orlando to requite your fidelity.'

" Lady, you will naturally suppose that I felt every disposition to serve my noble and worthy master, in addition to the compassion and interest I took in the welfare of the fair girl he so passionately adored. Yet, pardon me ! (for I am willing to confess my faults ;) I envied him the possession of so lovely a creature, while I also envied the exalted station to which she was going to be raised by a connexion so eminently above her hopes and expectations ; and, villain that I was, like the evil serpent when he first beheld the beauteous, loving pair in the garden of Eden, I was on the point of blasting their happiness for ever, by previously disclosing the intentions of the Duke regarding the lovely Delcrusa to his mother, ere he set out for Italy !" Michello for a moment paused ; and Agatha, shocked involuntarily at a confession of depravity almost unexampled, indignantly exclaimed :—

" Cruel, cruel Paulo ! and could you indeed betray a master who reposed such generous and unlimited confidence in you ? Oh no ! say that you did not betray him, and that you resisted all evil temptations to do him injury !"

"Lady," replied Paulo, much hurt by the tone and manner in which the wounded feelings of our heroine had addressed him, and stung by a reproach which he could ill bear at the present moment,—“it is only by a confession of faults that the repentant sinner can have any claim to mercy or forgiveness ; and it would then be cruel to reject his supplication when so fervently implored. It is not rejected by Heaven itself, whose brightest attribute is mercy. Be not then so severe, nor wound me thus deeply, for know that I was not so inhuman as you suppose. Had Paulo betrayed his master, you, lady, had probably never been in existence ; for you are the offspring of the Duke's marriage with Agatha Delcrusa : you are the daughter of the Duke of Braganza, and the sole heiress of the splendid fortunes of that illustrious house.”

Astonishment too great for utterance sealed the lips of our lovely heroine ; who at length faintly murmured :—“How inscrutable, yet how strictly just, are thy ways, Almighty Providence !”

Michello, without seeming to notice her pious ejaculation, continued his narrative in the following words :—

“Yes, lady, I did resist temptation, though I will own that it cost me some struggles ; so frail are earthly creatures in a world which every hour, every moment of our lives, teems with casualties, to stagger and to change our firmest resolutions, if the basis is not grounded on Christian faith, and if our principles do not flow from the source of pure and incorruptible virtue ;—unless ‘the spirit is willing, though the flesh is weak.’ I conquered, and for once enjoyed the repose which ever will and ever must proceed from the reflection of an unsullied conscience ; let whatever other ill betide us, this surely is a blessing of which it is not in the power of mortals to deprive us !

“On that very night I discharged my duty to my master most faithfully ;—he was right in supposing that gold had the power of magic, for with that I found no difficulty in gaining access to the solitary apartment where the Duchess had confined from all mortal gaze the lovely Delcrusa. She was pale and spiritless, and startled with involuntary surprise on my first approaching her ; but no sooner had I disclosed the purport of my visit, than her beauteous features brightened into a glow of crimson more tran-

scendently lovely than the roseate blush of morn ; and she timidly exclaimed :—

—“ Ah, wherefore does the Duke seek an interview with a wretched girl who has now no other protector save innocence and Heaven, to shield her from the cruelty of the unrelenting Duchess, at whose terrific presence my heart sinks with fear and apprehension too great to bear ! Alas, should this meeting be discovered it would be death to me and tortures to him ; and what will it avail to proclaim that I am innocent ?—I implore you, Michello, to persuade his Grace to desist from this rash attempt to see me. Tell him that the prayers of Agatha Delcrusa will follow him continually, and that I shall think of him to the last hour of my fleeting existence.—But oh, to see him once, and then to part with him for ever ! think, Michello, if you ever loved, what it is to part for ever to hearts so tender, so unchangeable, and so true as mine ! and bid him fly me now that I am able to pronounce the word farewell without a struggle or a sigh :—but not without a tear,” added the beauteous sufferer ; “ no, Michello, tell him that I shall shed many bitter tears at the remembrance of departed happiness, and days that never more will take their turn again.”

“ Believe me, lady, I was by no means unmoved by the agitation which pervaded the countenance of the lovely Delcrusa ; and telling her that, ere the morning dawned upon her, she would have more reason to rejoice in her prosperity than lament over her hapless destiny, respectfully retired, as I unclosed the door to admit a guest of far more consequence, and who would probably find better means to console her than I could : and the result was, lady, that at an early hour the ensuing morning, the lovely Florentine, urged by the strong persuasions and resistless eloquence of the man she adored, became the wife of the Duke of Braganza ! I alone being witness to the nuptial knot being tied between them. The ceremony was performed by a clergyman of the established Church of England, who, being bound to secrecy, instantly retired after having discharged his duty : and so instantaneously were these rites solemnized, that the fair bride returned to her solitary chamber in the castle of Montault without the slightest suspicion of so extraordinary a circumstance ever having taken place—her

female guard, which was placed over her by the Duchess, having yielded her lovely prisoner for a few short hours to our discretion, and received a reward which amply compensated her for her trouble. She was aged and infirm; and, grown weary of the intolerable caprices of her mistress the haughty Duchess, very shortly retired from her service, and has long since been numbered with the dead.

"In a few days, lady, in a few short fleeting days, Orlando and his lovely bride, who had frequent meetings through means of the ancient domestic that I speak of, were under the painful necessity of submitting to a separation. Previous to the parting hour; however, the still supposed Agatha Delcrusa was restored to the good graces of her protectress; the Duke having obtained a solemn promise from his mother that she would not part with the lovely Florentine during the time that he remained on the continent. The promise was granted, Agatha set at liberty, and a formal adieu (in the presence of the Duchess) was exchanged between the fond lovers, then indeed bound to each other by the most solemn and sacred ties; after which the Duke immediately departed for the shores of Italy. What pretext the Duke had given to his mother for my remaining behind I know not, but I concluded that it was a most satisfactory one, as she did not manifest the slightest disapprobation toward me, but on the contrary deputed to me the authority of being her steward till the Duke should again return and claim my services. Alas, lady, till that period my heart and my principles were incorruptible toward my noble master; but here I fell into the base and the sordid, the cruel and the perfidious.—Fortune had come upon me with both hands full; and avarice, that infernal demon, crept into my heart, and cackered and destroyed every virtuous sensation there! while the bewitching smiles of the insinuating and beautiful Duchess made me intoxicated with vanity, pride, and ambition, too extravagant to be kept within bounds! I no longer considered myself as Paolo Michello, the dependant on the bounty of the generous Orlando, but as the familiar companion and confidential friend of an illustrious and charming lady, with whom I was continually gaining favour, and who looked upon me with the most partial eye—

nay, I had so far forgotten myself, that there were moments when I actually aspired to the hand of the wealthy Dowager Duchess of Braganza. Meanwhile I adopted the most insolent and haughty demeanor toward my young and lovely mistress, which that exalted creature bore with the most exemplary forbearance; yet I could perceive that a tear sometimes glistened in her soft azure eyes, and that she often threw on me an imploring look, the meaning of which I could not define, till one morning the Dowager Duchess summoned me to attend her to her dressing-room, where, desiring me to be seated, she addressed me with the sweetest smile of affability thus:—

“ ‘ Michello, I have this morning received despatches from Italy. The Duke is well, and will probably protract his visit to his brother beyond the limited time that he appointed for his return to Montault castle; and, as you are well aware that I have reasons which determine me to persuade him to continue on the continent as long as possible, what plan do you imagine that I have proposed, to secure him from the dangerous temptation of being again exposed to the beauty of Delcrusa ?’

“ ‘ I really cannot possibly presume to guess, your Grace,’ replied I, betraying doubtless the utmost confusion, and colouring deeply at the scrutinizing glance with which she surveyed me.

“ ‘ Nay, you will be prodigiously proud of the distinguished favour I am going to confer on you, Michello,’ uttered she.

“ I bowed most devoutly at receiving so high a compliment, and the Duchess resumed the thread of her discourse.

“ ‘ Adam was not happy till he got an Eve,’ continued she, ‘ neither will Michello be the worse for a pretty wife ! I therefore propose to marry you to a young person of my choice, if you have no objection to enter the holy state of matrimony; on your doing which, I will portion off the bride in the handsomest manner that is possible:—what says Michello to my plan ? what can you wish for more than a handsome wife, with a handsome fortune ?’

“ Lady, I was silent, more from internal agitation than a feeling of surprise at the words which the wily Dowager had expressed; and which, but for one circumstance that no mortal means

could now prevent, would have transported me to the very height of the most ecstatic bliss : for I was at no loss to guess what object she had selected for me to lead to the temple of Hymen : she could mean no other than the lovely Florentine, for whose dejected and beseeching looks to me I could now account ! and I deplored the indissoluble ties which bound her to another, and placed her beyond my reach ; as also did I heartily curse the servile obedience I had shown my master, in withholding from the Duchess the knowledge of his private marriage with an object, the possession of whose transcendent beauty I had always envied him ! It was possible that my countenance exhibited to the Duchess the conflicts I was suffering, for, with a haughty and indignant frown, she exclaimed :—

“ ‘ And is it thus you requite me for the interest I so warmly take in your welfare, Michello ? ’

“ I found that it was now necessary both to conceal the actual state of my feelings, and to give an answer which might afford some probable reason for the embarrassment I had so incautiously betrayed ; and, in a tone of the greatest humility, I replied :—

“ ‘ Pardon me, your Grace, if overwhelmed, nay confounded, at the noble generosity you have displayed to one so unworthy of engaging your attention, I was at first unable to acknowledge your unbounded goodness. ’

“ ‘ You do not answer plainly, Michello, ’ observed the Dowager in a less haughty accent, ‘ whether you are inclined to accept of the proposal I have made ; which, if so noble and generous, you seem strangely agitated about, and tardy in your acceptance of. But remember that I am not of a disposition to be trifled with, and wish to know your real sentiments on the subject. ’

“ ‘ I have never yet reflected on the subject of matrimony, madam, ’ rejoined I, still more perplexed regarding what to say in so excited a state of my feelings.

“ To which she replied with a smile of the most insinuating softness :—

“ ‘ It does not require much consideration where the objects are so inviting—a young and pretty wife with a pretty fortune ; few men would leave the banquet untasted, when nectar is provided by

the very gods themselves ! what think you of my lovely Florentine, Michello ?

“ Lady, though I had expected that this was the pretty wife which her Grace had so liberally provided for me, yet I actually had not the effrontery to offer an acknowledgment of my thanks for so beautiful and rich a prize : alas ! I well knew that prize was far beyond my reach, and I faltered out :—

“ ‘ I marry Miss Delcrusa ? surely your Grace cannot forget that there are certain causes yet existing which would be a barrier to my hopes of ever becoming the husband of Miss Delcrusa ! whose affections it would be impossible for me to obtain after——’

“ ‘ Her affections ! the affections of a whining, romantic idiot !’ uttered the Dowager, her eyes flashing fury at the same instant, ‘ how absurdly ridiculous, Michello, to suppose that *her* affections will ever be consulted in any such thing—*she*, who vainly and arrogantly pretends to flatter herself with the presumptuous hope, that the heir of the illustrious house of Braganza is to be allured by her charms ; perhaps the pretty fool imagines that he is really fond of her !’

“ ‘ And if she imagines so, I do not think, your Grace, that she is much mistaken,’ uttered I, ‘ for I am well aware that the Duke is fond of her :—nay so passionately, that I should not be in the least surprised if one day the lovely Florentine was to become the Duchess of Braganza !’

“ The Dowager absolutely gasped for breath ; her lips turned pale and her cheeks became colourless, so much infuriated was she at this intelligence ! at length she recovered the use of her faculties and the power of speech, and darting on me a look full of the most malignant meaning, she pronounced :—

“ ‘ *She* one day become the Duchess of Braganza ! and have you any more particular cause for supposing so, Michello, than merely that Orlando is passionately fond of her, as he would probably be of any other pretty woman that he might happen to see ? there are more pretty women in the world besides Delcrusa.’

“ ‘ Of that I have an incontestible proof before me at this moment, madam,’ uttered I, bowing very low, and the Dowager did not seem insensible to the flattering compliment ;—‘ but when a

man is so passionately in love with a woman as my noble master is with Miss Delcrusa, I should naturally conclude that he means something, your Grace.'

" 'He means no more than most young men at his age,' cried the Dowager, 'and they mean nothing. Though they should fall in love with twenty women, the same story is repeated over and over again to all, and *I love you* serves as a motto for a ring to the whole.'

" 'At the word *ring* I started,' for I thought of that which the Duke had placed on the pretty finger of his lovely bride, and which though not worn, was still in her possession.'

" 'So then, you reject the offer I have made, in the supposition that Delcrusa will be the wife of my son, and consequently Duchess of Braganza.' But mark me, Michello,' added the Duchess, 'before that day arrives, the minion may be no more! she will moulder in the dust ere a ducal coronet graces her pretty brow, I warrant me!'

" 'I was silent; and, though I saw the dark meaning which was fully expressed in her malignant countenance, I did not choose to understand her.'

" 'Say whether or not you reject my offer, ere you depart from my presence, Michello,' uttered she, haughtily.

" 'Your Grace, I know not how to act in so delicate an affair,' cried I, 'but I will speak to the lady on the subject, of whose refusal I am already certain; still, in compliance with your Grace's commands, I will address Miss Delcrusa on the subject.'

" 'I have already paved the way for your reception,' uttered the Dowager, to my extreme astonishment, 'and Delcrusa is now waiting to receive you.'

" 'As an accepted lover?' demanded I, 'I can scarcely credit the evidence of my senses, your Grace, yet do not at the same time wish to disbelieve your words.'

" 'I do not say that you will altogether be received by the pretty moppet as an accepted lover,' cried the Dowager with a smile; 'the proud girl is too vain of her charms, and may treat you a little sullenly at first, but she dares not refuse you: if you accept of my proposal, five thousand pounds shall be your reward.'

“ ‘ I would not for ten thousand pounds hazard the displeasure of the Duke my master,’ replied I.

“ ‘ I will double the five thousand if you marry Delcrusa,’ rejoined the smiling Duchess; ‘ go and try your fortune, and when you have waited on Delcrusa, return and inform me of the success of your embassy.’

“ With these words the Dowager Duchess dismissed me : and I will confess, Lady, that it was a considerable relief at this moment to be released from the presence of an object, who never till now had unveiled the duplicity and the deep stratagem which composed her dangerous and insinuating character ; and, had I been wise, or worthy of the illustrious master whom I served, I should at once have shunned her as the basest reptile of the human race ! but ambition led me on, and the greedy thirst for wealth and power stifled every virtuous propensity, and hushed for awhile the voice of conscience : retiring therefore to my chamber, I contemplated the rich and golden harvest I should reap, by conforming to every wish of the Dowager Duchess, rather than by being true to the interest of my master ; nay, at one moment I actually was base enough to entertain a thought that I could without difficulty force the young and beauteous wife of Orlando from the castle of Montault, and, carrying her away to some remote country, compel her to listen to my vows ; obtain the promised reward of the Dowager ; and enjoy the fruits of my daring enterprise in some employ by which I could add to my ill-gotten store, and become a wealthy and independent man !—in short I determined to possess myself of the charms of the lovely Florentine, and with this intention, and assuming an air of humility which was foreign to my feelings, paid a visit to her apartment on the following morning.”

CHAPTER XXX.

"She speaks—yet she says nothing; what of that
 Her eye discourses, I will answer it:—
 I am too bold: 'tis not to me she speaks:
 Two of the fairest stars in all the heavens,
 Having some business, do entreat her eyes
 To twinkle in their spheres till they return.

"Ах, Lady!" continued Paulo, "when I entered the apartment where your beautiful mother was sitting, how transcendently lovely did she then appear, although she had been weeping. Her loose neglected flaxen tresses but partially concealed the snowy neck on which they hung; on one arm she had reclined her pale and lovely cheek, and her soft azure eyes were scarce uplifted from their dewy lids when she perceived my approach, which was not with the step and the manner that I had been wont to use, but with a bold and familiar glance I gazed upon her lovely form. I was shortly repelled, however, by a look which seemed to penetrate my inmost soul, as she sternly demanded to know what was the purport of my business there, and whether I had any intelligence to communicate from the Duke my master?—to which I insolently replied, that I neither knew, or cared to know aught of the Duke or his concerns!

"Then what business have you in this apartment, Sir?" uttered she, haughtily and indignantly, or so I thought it; 'and why do you look at me with such presuming confidence? Did the Duke of Braganza, did *my husband*, charge you thus to treat his wife in his absence,—that you have the effrontery to open the door of my chamber, without so much as thinking it necessary to knock once for permission to enter?—Did my Orlando bid you to use me thus?—answer me:—or who else has set you on so grossly to insult me?"

"Lady," answered I, somewhat baffled and abashed by the spirited manner in which she had addressed me, 'I am sent hither by authority of my illustrious mistress, and I must have audience with you whether you like it or not: 'the complexion of my fortunes,

Lady, is changed ; and, with change of fortune, men change their habits and their nature,—as I have now done mine ! I am Paulo Michello still ; but you no longer behold me the Paulo Michello living in the service of the Duke of Braganza, the dependent of his bounty ! In brief, Lady, I am come to be a wooer to you, if you will have me such ;—your husband, as you call him, is unworthy of the title, or long ere this he would have returned and claimed the privilege of his possession, of which you make so proud a boast : but men can be false, Lady,—false as women are fair.'

" Whether pure astonishment had sealed the lips of the lovely Florentine, or every faculty was now absorbed in terror and dismay, at the perfidious, unmasked villain who appeared before her, I could not at that precise moment determine : but, strange to say, she did not utter one word of reproach, expressive of her wounded or insulted feelings ; and, though her soft, celestial, patient countenance was as a dagger to my guilty heart, yet she spake not.

" At length I faltered out—' Lady, I wait the honour of your commands ; the Duchess expects me, and I must shortly attend her, with the result of the conversation that has passed between us.'

" ' By which result neither Paulo Michello nor the Duchess will be much benefitted,' said she, in so calm, dignified, and collected a tone and manner, that, hardened villain that I was, I felt confounded and abashed at my own effrontery ; while I also felt the consciousness how much superior virtue awes when vice would attempt to shake the firm basis on which it is constructed ; and I actually trembled beneath the expression of the beauteous orbs which were now fixed contemptuously on me, as the lovely Agatha addressed me in the following impressive words :—

" To expect justice and humanity from one who has so basely renounced them, with the aggravated offence of having also betrayed a generous, confiding, and unsuspecting master, would, I know, be a vain hope, even if I were inclined to cherish it. But do not once flatter yourself, Paulo Michello, that I am weak enough tamely to submit to become the instrument of your infa-

mous and cruel designs, because I am a helpless woman at this immediate crisis of my affairs, and placed within the reach of your wicked machinations; believe not that you shall ever succeed or prosper in your evil intentions, or that you shall infect me with fears to which I am a stranger. I am the wife of the Duke of Braganza, his honourable, true, and faithful wife; nor will I ever prove false to my noble Lord: and with thee, thou something worse, or surely less than man!—think'st thou for such a reptile I would basely contaminate the name of my dear and virtuous Lord? No, I will rather perish first!—Go to the Duchess, then, and proclaim my marriage with her son, and with it the sentiments of my firm, undaunted mind, which neither you nor she shall ever change. Tell her how far more welcome death will be to me than thy arms, perfidious monster!—tell her that a virtuous woman can freely die, but never live dishonoured! But mark me, Paulo Michello! should one spark of honour yet remain unextinguished in that guilty breast, cherish the expiring flame, till it glows again with virtue, before repentance may arrive too late to do you service,—and I swear, Paulo Michello, never to betray your treachery to your master.'

" 'And will you swear by Heaven, Lady, to forget the wrong I have now done you, should I be yet faithful to my trust,' exclaimed I, in the most breathless accents, 'and that to the Duke you never will reveal this circumstance?'

" 'I swear, by Heaven, and all its holy angels, that the Duke shall never be informed of it from the lips of Agatha!' cried she: 'should he even return in this sad state of my tortured feelings, and inquire the cause, he shall never know that Paulo Michello has deceived him!'

" 'I take you on your oath, Lady,' exclaimed I; 'forgive the bold, presuming suit I have offered to your immaculate beauty: encouraged by the Duchess, alas! I have been unwittingly led on to this base encounter. I pray you pardon me, and never more shall Paulo Michello forget his duty to Braganza's bride!'

" 'I have promised, and have I not also sworn? uttered the beauteous Florentine, 'though Orlando should return to-night, I will not betray thee.'

“On this consolatory assurance of your lovely mother, lady, I quitted the apartment, in which I had so long remained to her an intrusive and a most hateful guest ; and repairing to my own, took a review of my past conduct with horror, and the bitterest thorns of compunction goaded my feelings. Would to Heaven that I had been left to these reflections ! but I was destined to become the dupe of the deep, designing, artful and insinuating Dowager, as well as being a second time tempted by the demon avarice : in answer, therefore to the inquiries that she made as to how I had succeeded with my proffered suit to the fair Florentine, I artfully evaded any particular explanation, in the hope of obtaining some part of the promised reward ; and, on my assuring her that I believed a little time would conquer the repugnance which the yet inflexible beauty discovered towards me, and that I need not absolutely despair on the first interview I had obtained with her on the subject, the Dowager was so transported by the intelligence, that she presented me with a gift of five thousand pounds, with a promise of five more to be paid down on my actually becoming the husband of the then supposed Agatha Delcrusa. Having thus secured the one half of this ill-gotten wealth, at the expense only of a few dexterous lies, I was unwilling to relinquish the other part of my booty while yet a prospect remained of securing it, by leading the Dowager to imagine that I should obtain the possession of Agatha ; requesting, therefore, the favour of my illustrious mistress, that she would not use any authority in order to enforce her commands at so early a period of the affair, but leave the proud beauty solely to my management, I continued to keep both ladies in complete ignorance of each other's sentiments ; while the castle of Montault continued for a short time in a state of tranquillity greater than might be imagined in the Duke's absence from his lovely bride !—but villainy at this period, lady, was not to triumph over the faithful votaries of bright and unexampled virtue.

“At an hour when least expected by the wily Dowager, the perfidious servant, or the transported bride, the Duke of Braganza suddenly arrived from Italy ; it was then that my coward conscience was struck as by a thunderbolt from Heaven, and I trembled, for the first time in my life, to meet the mild inquiring

glance of that master towards whom I had performed so treacherous a part. It was not that I feared the strict performance of the oath of the Duke's lovely wife, that I dreaded to encounter him, because I felt well assured that she never would forfeit it : but it was the heart galling pang of self reproach that preyed on my vitals, and rendered the self-accusing blush that burned high upon my cheek more intolerable to me than the flames of Etna's fiery gulph.

"In short, lady, I was not quite a villain, and had not yet acquired the art of looking a worthy, honourable man in the face whom I had so basely wronged, without feeling some sense of remorse. I was grown weary of remaining in the service of the Duke, besides being in continual dread of exciting the displeasure of the Dowager, who on the slightest provocation would have exposed me to my master and I longed for an opportunity of winging my flight to regions where I could live on better terms with my conscience, and where I could lay out the property which I had so basely acquired to some advantage. As the Duke, however, gave me no pretext to find fault, and the lovely Agatha no cause to suspect her of betraying me to her husband, I could not well make a speedy retreat from the castle of Montault : but I artfully took care, each successive day, to inspire the Duke, kind and indulgent as he ever was, with fresh disgust towards me ; and he one morning giving me some particular directions about his concerns, I chose wilfully to neglect them : upon which being questioned haughtily by him as to the motives for my repeatedly disobeying his commands, and altogether making use of such extraordinary conduct,—I answered instantly, that I did not care whether he approved of it or not, and that, if he pleased, I was willing to quit his service immediately.

" 'Repeat those words again,' exclaimed he, 'and you shall instantly be gone.'

"Lady, I had the audacity not only to repeat them, but to laugh in his face :—upon which he was so highly infuriated with passion as to give me a blow !—so unexpectedly, indeed, that I was nearly staggered by its force ; but, quickly recovering, I

darted on him a look of demoniacal vengeance, while as I retreated wards the door, I emphatically pronounced :—

“ ‘It is the first and it shall be the last insult ever received by me from proud Braganza’s wealthy Lord. For this blow you have my eternal, mortal hate ! night and morn, my hearty curses ! and for my revenge it shall come hereafter.—Till that time, Paulo Michello bids you a long farewell, Braganza !’

“ With these words I departed forever from the presence of the greatly astonished and highly incensed Duke ; and hurrying to my chamber, where I had all ready for my immediate flight, secured my treasure within a secret part of my vest, rushed down the staircase, and darted out of the castle gates ; from thence to the bosom of a thick wood, where I concealed myself for a few moments to recover my breath and dispose of my baggage : and, without waiting to consider what plan I should adopt, walked immediately to the sea-side, and took a boat to one of the ships then preparing to sail from the harbour, inquiring of the captain to what place he was bound, and whether he had room for a passenger :—his answer was,—

“ ‘For twenty ; I am bound for Italy :’ to which I replied, ‘ I am your man then,’ and, leaping on board, paid the money for my passage to the captain, bestowed my baggage very commodiously, drank a glass of grog to the health of Braganza’s lovely bride, and in a few hours beheld myself far distant from the white cliffs of Cromer, scudding under easy sail, and possessed of the sum of five thousand pounds, instead of the scanty wages of honourable industry—with a crafty head and a worthless heart !—but what of that ? I had a full purse to bear them company ; the golden calf to which all nations bow with reverence, and to which even kings pay homage ; and, although conscience still upbraided me, I refused to listen to its warning voice, and resolved to begin the world anew, with different principles and feelings to those which I had hitherto commenced my early days. I was now a man of independence and property, and I determined to increase it by every effort in my power, the means which I was to make use of being to me of little moment.

“ Lady, I will not dwell long upon the recital of what those

means were. Such a detail would only shock the delicacy of your feelings, and add to the horror and disgust with which you now behold me. I very quickly joined a host of lawless men, who, plundering on the high seas, regarded no other earthly object but rapine and every species of infamy that stratagem could invent to rob the unwary and the credulous victims who happened to fall a prey to their snares. With this band of pirates, for I could call them nothing else, I became connected for a length of time; and, being possessed of considerable more property than any of my associates, they unanimously decided that I should be their Captain, Hasrac second in command, and Manfrida third, while the rest were only to be subservient to our authority; and each having sworn allegiance and fidelity to me as their leader, we once more began our career under the prosperous gales of good fortune, coasting and pirating on the high seas with considerable success, or sometimes retiring to the place of our rendezvous, to revel and make merry with the good cheer we had constantly provided for us. On the banks of the Rhine there was an old hermitage, so artfully contrived, and hid in embowering shades, that no one could have imagined that it had ever been the abode of mortal man; it was beneath this hermitage that we formed a subterranean passage, in which we concealed our plunder and wealth; and, I shudder now as I relate it, it was to this dark and secret abode that we dragged the unfortunate individuals whom we treacherously surprised and stripped of their property; and who, if they once resisted, were devoted to—tremble not, lady, while I pronounce that *death* was the consequence of any refractory conduct on the part of the wretched victims, till I countermanded the inhuman order, and arrested the fatal blow."

"Oh, merciful Heaven!" exclaimed our lovely heroine, shuddering at this confession of the miserable Paulo; "and heard you no warning voice then to deter you from the commission of crimes so dreadful! Felt you no pity, no remorse?—alas! and do I now gaze on the face of a murderer?"

"No! by the immortal powers that tempers the winds and the waves;—murderer I am none lady!" replied Paulo, considerably affected by the terrors which he saw were so deeply impressed

on every lineament of her lovely countenance: "I have been guilty, cruel, treacherous, perfidious, but never would I permit a drop of human blood to be shed in my presence or by my order. No!—villain that I was, yet still that pang is spared me, and I call Heaven to witness that I have been the means of saving lives but never of destroying any."

"I rejoice to hear it," exclaimed Agatha, clasping her hands in fervent devotion, "forgive my emotion, and proceed with your narrative."

"Yes, Lady," continued Paulo, "there were not only moments when I was visited with remorse, when my heart felt pity, but when it also mourned in silent anguish and contrition over the depraved and unworthy actions I had been guilty of; and when I would willingly have yielded to repentance, had any warning voice been near at hand to whisper consolation to my wounded soul. But alas! I had no human being to whom I could unburden the secret of my heart; for, had I once committed myself with the lawless and ferocious men with whom I associated, they would have shown me no mercy, but, plundering me of all my property, have sacrificed my life to their brutal revenge, for wishing to be rid of their society, and resigning the authority with which they had invested me. Silence, therefore, impenetrable silence, was the only alternative I could adopt: for I began to be heartily tired of the dreadful scenes of rapine and riot, of excess and debauchery, to which I was constantly exposed; and, as I had now acquired a vast addition to my former sum of wealth, would very willingly have resigned my command over this ferocious set of men. Besides, lady, I had some inclination to visit a second time my native country, which was Italy. I had a mother there in the most abject state of poverty, and I had yet a spark of nature in my composition, which revived my affection for her, and reminded me of the sufferings she might be undergoing. Obtaining, therefore, leave of absence for a short time from my dissolute companions, I set sail for that country, for the express purpose of bringing my mother to reside with me. Lady, I did so. The old woman was transported with joy to behold her profligate son, and, seeing that I had returned wealthy and rich,

was not very delicate or scrupulous in inquiring by what means I had become possessed of this property, but very gladly accepted of my offer to provide for her future maintenance, and to return with me to the banks of the Rhine: previously to which, however, I had some business to transact in Denmark, and took my mother with me, intending to arrange my journey homeward and to take shipping from that place.

"As I had left Mysis, which was the name of my mother, at a cottage till my return from, negociation, and entertained no apprehension for her safety, I had wandered many miles beyond the boundaries which I had at first prescribed to myself, and, passing the Convent of the Holy Sisters as the deep shades of the evening were coming on, I entered there as a pilgrim, and was entertained by the holy friars in the most hospitable manner. Lady, you are no stranger to the Convent of the Holy Sisters."

On the first mention of this convent, our heroine had started with involuntary surprise, to which succeeded the tenderest recollections of the many happy, peaceful days she had passed in the society of the dear Lady Matilda St. Clair beneath its sequestered walls.

"You know then that I was educated in the Convent of the Holy Sisters, and perhaps born there," uttered Agatha, with symptoms of the most impatient curiosity.

To this Paulo, after a pause, replied:—

"There is not a circumstance of your whole life, lady, with which I am unacquainted:—but of this be certain,—you were not born in the Convent of the Holy Sisters, though taken there at a most tender period of your infancy. But to proceed with my relation. As I said before, I knew that Mysis was well housed in the cottage where I had left her till my return; and, being pressed by the holy fathers to pass the night at the convent, I readily consented, being overpowered with weariness and fatigue; but at supper I thought they questioned me strangely, and I heartily repented that I had yielded to their solicitation;—for one of the fathers, lifting up his cowl, glared upon me with distended eyes, and impatiently demanded to know what I had seen as I bent my way to the holy cloisters?

" 'Seen, holy father !' repeated I, trembling beneath his gaze, 'truly, nothing !'

" 'To which he slowly replied,—

" 'Truly thou could'st not see less.—Nor *heard'st* thou naught of the foul and most unnatural murder that was committed near the walls of this holy sanctuary, late on yesternight ?'

" 'Murder ? horrible !' exclaimed I : 'I have heard of none, father ; on whom, by whom committed ?'

" 'An English gentleman,' rejoined he, 'hath foully and treacherously surprised a noble cavalier, waylaid and murdered him, as he was journeying homewards to his chateau ; after which most foul and horrible deed the assassin fled ;—no one knows whither, but a high reward is offered to whomsoever shall chance to find him. He cannot be far hence, for he was desperately wounded in the encounter. Their cause of quarrel was a beautiful lady, to whom the cavalier was paying honourable court—the Lady Matilda St. Clare ; a lady of most spotless excellence and discretion.'

" 'The Lady Matilda St. Clare !' exclaimed Agatha, in wonder and astonishment ; "my lovely mistress, and friend of my early youth,—was it she, Paulo ?"

" 'I know but of one Lady Matilda St. Clare,' uttered Paulo, "who is Abbess of the Convent of the Holy Sisters, and it was her of whom the father spoke with reverence.—On this intelligence I departed, lady, at the break of morn, from the holy sanctuary, after expressing every visible sign of concern and horror at the commission of so foul a deed ; but, Heaven pardon me, I was more elated at the prospect of obtaining the high and rich reward which was offered for his detection, than disposed to lament over the untimely death of the murdered gentleman ! hastily bidding farewell, therefore, to the ghostly confessors, I struck into a neighbouring forest, where I searched into every bush and brake, in order to trace the object of my inquiry ; whom I imagined, from the account I had heard, could not have been very far distant, and had either fainted with the loss of blood, or probably had already expired !—but my search was unavailing, and my thirst of gold disappointed ; and, heartily cursing my folly, and the wounded man for having exposed me to such unnecessary trouble without

either gain or profit of any kind, I halted at a solitary ale-house in order to procure some refreshment; the master of which was a surly kind of a fellow, who at first would have refused me admittance, on the score of not wishing to be disturbed at so late an hour.

“ ‘Then what the devil do you hang that sign over your door for?’ cried I. ‘It purports that this house is for the accommodation of travellers, does it not?—and I beg you will let me know by what authority you refuse a shelter to your guests, who weary with the fatigues of journeying, stand in need of refreshment.’

“ ‘You must promise, then, that you will depart as soon as you are satisfied,’ cried the surly host. ‘I have but one room, and that is at present occupied by a quiet, honest, sober gentleman, who has paid me very handsomely for a night’s lodging; and I would not willingly have any disturbance while he is taking his rest.’

“ On this intelligence my curiosity was roused, and I determined to see the ‘quiet, honest, sober gentleman’ before I should depart from this remote and solitary habitation. Divesting my tone, therefore, of its natural asperity, and assuming a look of the most gentle and friendly nature, I pleaded the motive of extreme weariness for my impatience, and entreated mine host to give me a night’s lodging, too, if he could in any shape grant me that favour.

“ ‘Come,’ cried I, depositing my purse in his hands at the same moment, ‘one guest is as good as another when they can afford to pay for what they call for, and reward the host liberally for his trouble.’

“ These last words operated like magic on the feelings of mine host, and the door flew wide upon its hinges to admit me. ‘Marinetta,’ cried he, addressing an excessively pretty-looking girl, who was seated at work at a table, ‘though the hour is late, yet I cannot turn honest, quiet, orderly gentlemen out on the forest, while I have a warm fire-side, and a flask of good Rhenish, to invite them to partake of. Come, bestir thee, wench, and make way for the honest gentleman, who seems sadly weary, and haste thee and get him some refreshment ere he be famished.’

“ ‘Do not disturb yourself, my pretty maiden,’ uttered I, drawing a chair to the lovely girl, and seating myself without further

ceremony; 'nor do you, my good host, put yourself out of the way on my account;—I shall do very well till you are quite ready, since you are willing to serve me.'

"The girl looked at me with smiling simplicity, and the host with the warmest approbation!—and during supper, which to say truth was none of the most ordinary, I had several opportunities of conversing with my host and the pretty black-eyed Marinetta: but I cautiously avoided making any inquiries respecting their sleeping guest, whom they were so unwilling to have molested. As there was an absolute necessity, however, for making some arrangements for my repose, Marinetta at length asked her father, (for so I supposed him,) where the gentleman was to retire for the night?—at which mine host seemed perplexed.

"Why, I tell you how we must manage, Marinetta,' cried he: 'you must put this honest gentleman into my bed, and as there are two beds in the room in which the other gentleman is, I will just go and ask leave to lie down on one of them for a few hours. It won't be long before the morning, and I don't mind for once going to roost with my clothes on, to oblige a civil, honest customer.'

"'But, dear uncle,' uttered Marinetta, greatly embarrassed: 'have you not promised—have you not faithfully promised to let no one enter where the gentleman is? and would it not be a pity to disturb him now that he is sleeping?'

"'Why, that is true, wench!' returned mine host, I did promise, and I don't like vastly to break my word.'

"'Nor shall you, mine host,' cried I; promises are sacred things; and I will rather sit me by the fire all night, than disturb the gentleman, who perhaps stands more in need of rest than I do at the present moment.'

"'Yet at the present moment I believe he is not much inclined to rest, Sir,' was the reply of Marinetta; but the look which accompanied the words spoke volumes, and I instantly suspected that, for some reason or other, they had concealed a murderer in their dwelling; and that this honest, quiet, sober gentleman, was no other than the wounded man, of whom I had so long been in search in the forest, and the assassin who had so basely murdered the Count near the Convent of the Holy Sisters.

"By no means willing to disclose my suspicions, however, I sunk into almost abstracted silence for the remainder of the night, and as the pretty Marinetta had retired, I pretended to be asleep, and thus eluded the observation of mine host, who, imagining me to be fast locked in downy slumbers, left me to enjoy them, while I heard him softly unclosethe door of a chamber above, and call Marinetta, who answered in a whisper,—

" 'Yes, but the lamp is out!'

" 'Are you certain that the bolt is fast, and that he cannot escape?—is all secure below?' inquired he.

" 'Lord, uncle, do you think that he can fly out of the key-hole, or run up the chimney?' said Marinetta in the same under key.

" 'But I am woundily afraid of the stranger below,' rejoined the host: 'yet he is snoring away like a travelling tinker; zounds, if he should once discover that I have a murderer in my house, he will take the captain and obtain the reward first! and what shall I get?—a rope twisted about my neck for having concealed him from the power of justice!'

" 'Well, but how do you know that Captain Singleton is the murderer of the Count after all, uncle?' cried Marinetta, 'and how shocking it would be to have him taken up only on suspicion!'

" 'Hold your fool's prate,' rejoined the host in an angry tone, 'and meddle not with matters that don't concern you. What! be-like, you would have me lose five hundred pounds because of your soft melting tears; but I won't bussy! I know that Captain Singleton had a grudge towards the Count, and that he is the man who waylaid and murdered him, and I will deliver him up to justice to-morrow morning. I would not spare him if he were my own father; so get to bed, you silly toad, and say nothing about the matter.'

"No answer being returned to this consolatory speech, and the door being again softly shut, I concluded that Marinetta had obeyed her uncle: for presently he returned, and, swallowing a large glass of brandy, fell into a profound and heavy slumber, I at the same moment snoring as loud as I was able on purpose to lure both him and Marinetta into the supposition of my being asleep:—and now, lady, having so freely confessed all my faults to you without

the slightest deviation from the truth, permit me also to disclose to you the real situation of my feelings at the moment I discovered that my suspicions were verified of the stranger in this solitary abode. One sentiment alone now influenced my bosom towards him, of so irresistible a nature, that I could not repel its force; and that sentiment was a determination to save him from the grasp of the hungry lion who only awaited to destroy him. Perhaps the voice of the compassionate angel who had pleaded for him might have had some tendency to awaken this new and spontaneous feeling in my hitherto mercenary breast; I will not say that the sympathy I felt for the unfortunate man was entirely produced by my own sensations, or that it was not, in part at least, reflected from the pity of Marinetta; but, once having determined, my action was prompt, and immediately put into execution; for, extinguishing the lamp that was burning on the table, I softly crept up the staircase, and tapped at the door of Marinetta's chamber, which was opposite to that where the stranger was sleeping. Calling her by her name, and bidding her fear nothing, as I came to offer her no harm, she quickly appeared, and gently demanded to know what I wanted?

“ ‘To save the life of an unfortunate suspected man,’ uttered I,—‘whom your uncle would basely betray for the mercenary love of gain! I heard you vainly plead for the persecuted being now beneath your roof,—but your uncle was deaf to compassion. You appear to have a disposition to befriend the stranger in his hapless situation.—If so, delay not a moment in accomplishing so benevolent an intention,—unclose the door of his chamber, and conduct me to his presence. I will yet find means to save him.’

“ I followed the light step of Marinetta, quick as the lightning's vivid flash; who, softly letting fall a bolt, admitted me to the chamber of the sleeping man. The countenance which I now beheld resembled not that of a cold-blooded assassin, but was the noblest and most benevolent my eyes had ever yet encountered.

“ ‘Ah! wherefore does he yet sleep so soundly, when danger is so near at hand?’ cried Marinetta, breathing her balmy lips over him. ‘No, he is not a murderer! he could not sleep thus

had he ever done so foul a deed. Awake, Captain Singleton, awake !”

“The sleeper opened his eyes, rested them first on the fair face of Marinetta, and then gazed on me in wild amazement.

“I then explained the full intention and purpose of my visit ;—and implored him to arise, and betake himself to immediate flight, as the only means of preserving his existence.

“‘And whither should I fly?’ uttered he, ‘a miserable, out-cast, unhappy wretch, without the means of supporting life, which is now a burden to me !——A perfidious friend robbed me of the affections of the woman that my soul adored.—Burning with rage and jealousy, I challenged him to meet me near the Convent of the Holy Sisters. We fought desperately ! he wounded me slightly ; I *him*, I fear, mortally. But I am no murderer ! I call Heaven to witness that I am not the *murderer* of the Count Sadaskie. We met as gentlemen, not as assassins : he had the same chance of advantage over me as I over him ;—and if the encounter has been fatal to one of us, I lament the catastrophe as the most unfortunate incident of my whole life, but I consider it no stain on my principles, or disgrace to my feelings. I never yet knowingly did an injury to mortal man !”

“‘You are, then, worthy of every man’s assistance in the hour of peril, Sir,’ cried I ; ‘and, stranger as I am, I implore you to accept of my services, and offer you my protection. I have the means to protect you, and am ready to be the companion of your flight.—Be not tardy, then, but hasten and follow the fortunes of Paulo Michello !”

“Lady, there was no time for Captain Singleton to offer me an acknowledgment of his gratitude, for the tints of the roseate morning were already breaking through the sky ; and, while Marinetta locked the door on her sleeping uncle, the Captain was completely dressed, and ready to depart.

“Marinetta,’ uttered I, ‘you will have little chance of happiness with so brutal a relation, after this occurrence has taken place.’

“‘Yet I repent not of the steps I have taken,’ uttered she, ‘I shall never repent of doing an act of kindness for a fellow-crea-

ture.—My uncle never used me well, and—and——.' She blushed a deep and rosy red, for I had taken her hand to bid her farewell. The tears trembled in her eyes, and, for the life of me, I could not resign the hand which she had so innocently placed in mine.

" 'Marinetta,' cried I, 'a third companion will be no incumbrance either to me or the Captain, in the progress of our journey hence. One word decides it; can you trust to the honour of a man who will never desert you through life?'

"Whether the pretty lips of Marinetta actually pronounced *yes*! I cannot tell; but, as she kept her hand fast locked in mine, I took her silence for consent, and hurried her away from the lonesome and uncomfortable dwelling in which she had so long been, the servant and the slave of an arbitrary, unkind, and sordid relation!

"The first plan I adopted in order to elude the vigilance of any pursuer was to change our habiliments to those of pilgrims journeying to the shrine of Loretto. We therefore passed on unmolested, except that the youth and beauty of Marinetta sometimes attracted the observation of the holy fathers, at the neighbouring convents at which we stopped to take refreshments, as was the established custom of the country, and regarded, indeed, as a sacred law.—Consequently no intrusive questions were asked, or inquiries made, respecting our situation or affairs. We were pilgrims, and that was sufficient to entitle us to the respect and the humanity of the holy fathers.

"But is it not a sin to assume a virtue which we are conscious does not belong to us?" inquired our lovely heroine, "and methinks the assumption of religion is the most unpardonable, for it is then sinning against Heaven itself!"

To which Paulo gravely replied,—

"It is an accusation the justice of which I cannot deny, lady; but, granting it to be so, I had no alternative to make choice of in so perilous an undertaking, and I proceeded with my fugitives without interruption, till we arrived in safety at the cottage in which I had left Mysis, my mother: to whom I did not then impart the misfortunes of Captain Singleton; but as to Marinetta, I

was obliged to repeat the truth—that I had run away with the pretty damsel, fallen in love with, and intended to marry her :—and I kept my word, lady. I married Marinetta, and she was the mother of your little waiting-maid. Beda is the only child of Paulo Michello.”

“ And does not Paulo Michello love his only child ?” inquired Agatha, with a look so expressive of her feelings, that he quickly answered, although with a mournful sigh,—

“ Can you doubt it, lady ?—I loved her mother ! ferocious and unfeeling as I was, I loved her mother ; is it not natural, then, that I should love the child of that mother ? The lion, lady, does not forsake his cubs. He is watchful in the hour of danger that no harm shall assail his young ones. Think you I have less feeling, as a man, that your word contains so sharp a rebuke ?”

Agatha had indeed uttered these words somewhat incautiously ; but she thought of the description that little Beda had once given of her mother. She had said that her mother had died broken-hearted :—and, were this true, Paulo Michello had not treated her kindly :—who, again sighing deeply, proceeded with his narrative.

“ I had offered protection to an unfortunate man, Lady, in a moment of the most imminent peril to his life, and I had taken every means to secure his immediate safety, by removing him from a place where all circumstances combined to blacken and disgrace his character ; and where he would instantly have been delivered up to the power of justice : for, with respect to his innocence there was no proof, and unless he had better grounds for substantiating the fact he had told me than bare assertion, he would inevitably have been convicted of the murder of the Count Sadaskie, and doubtless have suffered the sentence of the laws of the country. From this fate he had now an opportunity of escaping ; and I lost no time in reminding him that the sooner we set sail from Denmark the better. I had some fears too for my pretty Marinetta, on the score of the revengeful disposition of her brutal uncle ; who, I imagined, would take every step to arrest our flight. We consequently embarked on board of a Danish vessel at break of day, and, when fairly sailing on the bosom of
No. 18.

the ocean, I congratulated both my fugitives on the impossibility of their now being overtaken. As to the lively Marinetta, she seemed to endure no fears, save the thought alone of being separated from me ; of which I assured her there was not the slightest apprehension.—In short, lady, my vanity, which had hitherto lain dormant with respect to the other sex, was gratified and flattered by possessing the affections of so fair a creature. It was the first woman who had ever confessed that she truly loved me ; and I must have been a brute, even of the most savage kind, not to have requited the lively marks of tenderness which she so strongly evinced toward me.

“ But to tranquillize the agitated spirits of the unfortunate Captain, I found a task by no means easy. I had procured for him every comfort and accommodation that circumstances would admit of, for which I received the most fervent acknowledgments of his gratitude : but during the whole of the voyage, he sunk into abstracted fits of melancholy, and when I attempted to offer him consolation, and whisper peace to his wounded feelings, he would press my hand, faintly murmur out the name of Matilda, and oftentimes rush wildly into his cabin, to conceal from further observation the deep, corroding anguish of an exquisitely feeling, but painfully oppressed, and tortured, heart.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

“ How from the finny subjects of the sea
 These fishers tell the infirmities of men,
 And from their wat'ry empire, recollect
 All that men may approve, or men detect.
 A man whom both the waters and the wind
 In that vast tennis-court, have made the ball
 For them to play upon, entreats you pity him,
 He asks of you that never used to beg !”

“ At length we arrived, by a continuance of the most favourable gales, into safe soundings, with the German coast full in view.

I went down into the cabin, and congratulated Captain Singleton on his being now in perfect security from the reach of his most implacable enemies and vindictive foes : to which he replied :—

“ ‘ You know me not, if you imagine that I fear any ; or have ever merited the reproach of mortal man. Alas ! were it possible how gladly would I exchange situations with the man, whose death, if indeed he has fallen by my hand, I shall ever lament as the deepest calamity which has overtaken me in this chequered scene of life ! I, who never yet inflicted, believe me, a voluntary pang on the heart of one individual, in the course of my existence, must now long and heavily deplore the rash act of which we both were guilty ; for he provoked my vengeance. Yet I repent of my impetuosity. He had deeply injured me ; but to heaven alone I should have left the retribution of my wrongs, which never fails to punish injustice at its appointed time, and that time I should not have impiously forestalled :—the impropriety of which I must feel to the latest hour of my breath !

“ Alas : what stings will the reflection leave behind, that I have quitted Denmark branded with the name of an assassin ! Oh ! could I once be cleared of that, I were comparatively happy, even in this miserable state of the most agonizing suspense !”

“ As a flood of tears had accompanied this expression of the unhappy thoughts which preyed so deeply on the mind of the unfortunate Captain, I permitted him awhile to relieve therewith his full heart : but when calmer moments succeeded to this violent burst of grief, I reminded him that what had happened could not be recalled ; and as there was still a hope that life had not been totally extinguished in the fatal encounter, and that the Count Salskies might yet recover of his wounds, I entreated him, on the strength of such probability, not to yield to despair ; and under existing circumstances, to console himself with this reflection ; adding, that there was nothing within my means which I was not willing to effect for the restoration of his peace and happiness ; and although on our landing on the coast of Germany, I had no home to which I could invite a gentleman of his habits of life and manners, yet that I would take care to provide him with one not unworthy of his acceptance.

" 'Exalted, generous man !' exclaimed he, while I blushed, lady, at the consciousness of how little I had merited epithets so bestowed ; ' I will for the present accept of the asylum which your kind humanity is so ready to afford me ; but do not once imagine that I will suffer you to incur further expenses on my account. I am already greatly your debtor in a vast sum of obligation, which the wealth of worlds could never repay : but I thank Heaven that I am not pennyless, and that I have correspondents in Germany, to whom I can apply for immediate pecuniary aid, being indeed a part of my own property which is lodged in their hands ; and to a wretched man like me, if there can exist a ray of consolation to lighten the dark and cheerless path through which he is destined to wander, it springs from the thought alone, my generous friend, that I shall cease to be a burden on you, and likewise be possessed of the power of requiting so much unexampled kindness and humanity ! yet, tell me, to whom have I been so infinitely obliged, in the perilous hour of my adverse fate ? Breathe but your name, that I may register it on the tablet of a grateful heart, where it will rest forever !'

" Lady till this moment I had put on the security of virtue, and assumed what I really had not yet acquired, a deep contrition for the unworthy principles I had adopted, and the despicable life I had been leading with a degenerate set of beings, whose pride and boast had been to trample over every law both human and divine, so long as they acquired wealth, and enriched themselves at the expense even of their immortal souls, having forfeited all claim to the confidence and friendship of their fellow men ; and I trembled, for the first time in my life, to pronounce the name of Paulo Michello ; which, the Captain perceiving, he instantly exclaimed,—

" ' You are greatly agitated ; I am ignorant of the cause, and entreat your pardon if I have asked you an improper question ; and yet it was not idle curiosity, believe me, that made me wish to know the name of my preserver and my friend.'

" Lady, the spirit of celestial virtue, one returning spark of which I felt panting in my beating bosom, obtained the victory over all other emotions ; and, though tremulous and faint, through ex-

cessive fear, I made instant confession to Captain Singleton of all my past offences; told him that I now intended to renounce them for ever; and implored his advice and assistance how I should act to break off the connexion with my unworthy confederates whom I had left on the banks of the Rhine, in the Old Hermitage.

"Shocked and surprised at the dreadful secret I had betrayed, yet pleased with the confidence reposed in him, the Captain evinced the most powerful sensations of terror and disgust as he gazed at the expression of my countenance, which was almost distracted and wild, from shame and remorse being indelibly stamped on every feature. In the next moment, however, he yielded to a softer emotion, which inspired his breast with commiseration for the abject state to which I had reduced myself, by overstepping the bounds of principle and right feeling; and, extending his hand towards me, he bade me take it as the pledge of amity between us.

"Let those without faults alone condemn you, Paulo," uttered he, "and where shall we find them? We are the children of error from our birth, but he who descends to the grave without repentance cannot surely hope to find it there, in which there is *none*: it is *here* that we must seek for it, and in this world it is only to be obtained by the abandonment of all our former offences. Alas! it may be too late, when the messenger of death comes to summon us hence, to assume contrition for our ten-fold transgressions, if we have not most fervently renounced them before, and devoutly implored forgiveness for them. Paulo, let me hope that you will renounce your's, and that you will not renew a course of life so derogatory to human nature, so appalling to yourself, so offensive in the eye of Heaven, which, whether we sleep or wake, is unchangeably fixed upon us and our most secret actions. You have asked my advice, and I will give it to you as I would to the friend of my bosom: and if indeed our conversion is wrought by my misfortunes, I shall bless the hour of my calamity, for having brought returning virtue to the heart of a sinner! Do not, however, break with your associates too suddenly, or they may probably endanger your property, nay, destroy your very existence. Keep all your plans secret, and return to the Hermitage as usual. If they perceive the slightest glimmering of compunction about you, or that

you wish to renounce your former mode of life, they will instantly betray you to the power of the most insatiate revenge.—Get rid of them by slow and imperceptible degrees, and they will not then suspect you.'

" 'There are two of them, ferocious as they are in manners, by no means divested of the feelings of men, returned I ; ' the second and third in command of this desperate band—Hasrac and Manfrida : I have seen both of them repent, and even desist from committing outrages on humanity ; but the rest are mere savages, whom nothing has the power to restrain from acts of the direst and most remorseless cruelty.'

" 'Let then Hasrac and Manfrida be the chosen pair, who must without delay be the companions of your flight from this country ; for, trust me, Michello, you are not a moment safe if you continue to sojourn here. I wonder that you have reposed in security so long. The laws of the country are rigidly severe, and should any of your confederates once be detected in their nefarious practices, you, as the principal, would be the first to suffer the sentence of the law :—and how do you know, considering the depravity and corrupted principles of such a set of beings, that they would not tax you as being the instigator of the whole catalogue of their crimes? Michello, I shudder at the thought, while I pronounce that these monsters might escape by advancing this plea, and your life alone be the forfeiture of such a confession ! which they would not hesitate to make in the assured promise that their own pardon would be granted. Let us then, as soon as the vessel is once more come to her moorings, choose some retired and sequestered habitation, to which you can prudently conduct your aged mother and the youthful Marinetta, leaving me the guardian of their safety while you go to your dangerous confederates, and investigate their proceedings, and what they have done in your absence. But do this with caution :—let not one sentence escape which may lead them to suspect your apostacy towards them. If you have property, secure and instantly remove it ; then return, and we will further consult what means shall be taken for our immediate departure from this country, where every hour threatens you with destruction to your property and life.'

" A cold shuddering crept over me, and undefined forebodings of evil at this moment instructed me instantly to adopt the excellent counsel of a man whom I now regarded as the guardian angel whom Providence had dropt in my way to tempt me from the commission of future evil ! and most heartily did I congratulate myself on the acquisition of such a friend, to whose guidance I was determined to submit myself. On the moment, therefore, that the vessel arrived safe in the harbour, I hurried my mother and Marinetta into the boat, and, landing on the shore, conducted them to a private hotel where neither names or characters were searched into : here, having bestowed our baggage carefully, we partook of refreshments, after which, the captain and myself went out in quest of the most remote and solitary dwelling that we could find in a sea-port town ; and it was not long before we met with one perfectly suitable for our purposes in the house of a poor widow-woman, whose husband, having recently died at sea, left her entirely destitute of support, and glad enough to avail herself of any means of obtaining a livelihood however precarious. She had a large and roomy house, close to the sea-side, and having offered her very liberal terms, she joyfully accepted of them. I made conditions that she was to receive no other inmates under her roof during our stay, which I told her would probably be but for a short period. Marinetta and my mother were to occupy but one bed-chamber ;—the captain and myself separate ones : and in a few hours we found ourselves comfortably lodged at the poor widow's, who had taken no small pains to render her habitation as commodious, and as agreeable to us, as she possibly could ; and it was under this poor widow's roof, lady, that I became the husband of my pretty Marinetta. We were espoused by a priest of her own persuasion, and no questions were asked as to the propriety of the case. The fact was, that I put an extinguisher on all impertinent and idle curiosity by depositing a very liberal sum of the ready *ekine* into the hands of the pious priest, which disposed him to perform the duties of his function with the utmost alacrity ;—for neither priests nor philosophers are insensible to the power of gold ! They indeed labour hard to make us believe the contrary, but we must be blind could we give credit to such assertions.

"But to proceed.—I found that my confederates had made some very successful pirating on the high seas, and had actually captured a fine vessel, laden with valuable merchandize, going to Bengal: between the crew of which, and the desperadoes who were determined to board her, I was given to understand that a most violent contest had taken place, in which these inhuman savages had spared neither sex nor age—there having been two Indian female slaves on board, who shared no better fate than their unfortunate companions. Though I listened to this account with, apparently, the utmost composure and even apathy, yet my heart bled at every pore as they related the variety of tortures they had inflicted on these suffering, helpless creatures! but, remembering the caution given me by my invaluable monitor and friend, I rallied my spirits, called them brave fellows, and inquired the name of the vessel of which they had so successfully gained possession.

"‘The *Wolfscroft*!’ answered Manfrida: ‘but don’t imagine, captain, we have been such fools as to let this name stick by her. No, by St. Peter! we soon pulled down the *warrior* that was stationed at her head, and made fire-wood of him; and in place of this *Wolfscroft*, we gave my lady another name, and that shall stick by her as long as there is a plank left in her pitchy sides.’

"‘And what name is that, Manfrida?’ inquired I.

"‘The *Bold Buccaneer*,’ exclaimed he in a ferocious tone, succeeded by a horrible grin; ‘for he must be bold as the very devil who shall take her from us! But prithee, captain, now you are come, let us have your orders. It strikes me that the sooner we sheer off the better, now we have got this prize: for if we stay here cruising about this coast much longer, we shall be nabbed for fishing in troubled waters. I don’t like the situation of this coast vastly, I promise you! There’s plenty of sharks about, that will keep a pretty sharp look-out for us; and we men of mettle must beware of the flint, or we shall be blown to atoms before we can cry *Jack Robinson*!—What say you, captain, to our tacking about the very first opportunity?’

"‘I applaud your design,’ said I, ‘but must have some few hours to consider of it. I have brought some friends with me

from Denmark, and I must return to them before I can ultimately decide on my place of destination.'

" 'Friends!' repeated Manfreda, with a half-suspicious and angry glance, which was immediately interpreted by Hasrac, who fiercely exclaimed,—

" 'Friends! and has Paulo Michello friends who are at the same time strangers to his confederates?—who are they?—we will know this moment, or——' He placed his hand on his sword and paused—for with one look I made him tremble, as I resolutely pronounced:—

" 'Dastardly coward! do I guess at your intention aright?—and would you rush on an unarmed man, your captain and your leader?—and would you, Manfreda, permit this gross infringement on the rules of our society, and tamely stand by and see your captain murdered, even by the hand of him whom he raised from the low dunghill where his fate had placed him?—I do not think so; yet answer me!'

" 'Sir, I do not think that Hasrac meant to harm you,' cried Manfreda surlily, 'but you have troubled him, and even dogs like us must needs growl when we are trampled on: we are your confederates, your firm allies, and we have served you faithfully. We have never forsaken you, and we will ourselves suffer no deception, for we are men of honour, though we are desperadoes. Produce these friends, that we may know their merits.—Why have you not brought them with you to the Hermitage?'

" I smiled contemptuously, while I replied with equal spirit,—

" 'I will not be so interrogated. Know your duty better! Do you expect me to resolve that question? I am your captain; and when you invested me with this authority, you bade me use it whenever a man among you attempted to dispute it. Provoke me not to punish you as you deserve, for, by the eternal Powers, I will not bear this tamely!—When I first came hither, by whose means were you provided with money to carry on your profession?—Paulo Michello's. Who enabled you to live when you could not plunder?—why, Paulo Michelle too! can you name to me one of you that had a single sous when first I joined in your confederacy?—who had the money bags? who purchased arms?

who laid in the winter stores ? who kept you hungry, half-starved hounds from perishing ?'—' Why, Paulo Michello !'—uttered they, one and all unanimously, ' our noble captain !—Pardon, pardon, we crave your pardon, and will henceforth be obedient to your commands.'

" ' Your friends shall freely share our spoil,' uttered Manfreda.

" ' And we will greet them with welcome on board of the Bold Buccaneer,' cried Hasrac.

" ' Now you speak like men !' returned I, ' and I will treat you accordingly. Know then that two of these friends are merely women :—the third an honest gentleman, whom I protected from the outrage and malice of vindictive foes. His safety was endangered, nay, his very life exposed ; I preserved it, and bore him here from a far distant country.—I will still preserve him while I have existence. You must do the same. Promise that you will never endanger the life of the brave Captain Singleton.'

" ' We promise all,' exclaimed they.

" ' But for the women, captain,' cried Manfreda ; ' will not one quit your term."

" ' One only, you have truly said,' answered I, ' for that one is my wife ;—Marinetta, the younger, is the wife of your captain. The other is my mother. You must treat them both with respect and duty, and the brave Singleton as a superior officer, for such he is, and one who has fought in his country's battles, and endured the hardships of many a weary campaign ; his honest and industrious laurels, gained in the field of victory, enable him to live comfortably for the residue of his days in some lone retreat far from the busy haunts of mankind, for he is a man of sorrow. The loss of a female whom he once passionately adored has infected him with a deep malady, which is incurable. Thus far, my confederates, I have acquainted you with the history of my friend. Inquire no farther, but respect him as you value the allegiance you have sworn to me.'

" With this communication they seemed satisfied, Hasrac only appearing with a discontented frown, which however gradually dispersed, especially when on the following morning I introduced the captain and my mother and wife among them ; to whom they showed every mark of deference and respect.

"My youthful wife was too much attached to me, and too inexperienced, to inquire what connexion I had formed with these men, and I was very far from wishing to make her more intimate with my concerns. She had fine clothes, plenty of good cheer, and my entire affections; and the innocent creature was perfectly happy, and even proud of the station in which I had placed her.

Nor was my old mother less satisfied with her present mode of life. She had known nothing but hard drudgery in her youthful days; it was with no small pleasure, therefore, that she contemplated her present change of fortune, and she was too wary and wise to say ought that had a tendency to excite my displeasure toward her.

"Meanwhile, I had consulted with my friend as to what place we should conduct the ship to, and what country we should steer for; having bestowed every article on board of her, and removed our stores from the place of concealment: and, assuring the captain that I was determined to set sail on the first break of the morning from a port so impregnated with danger, he after a pause of a few moments, addressed me in the following terms:—

"'Michello, you have been the preserver of my life, and 'tis fit that I should render you some return of gratitude for an act so noble. With the offences of your past conduct I have nothing to do; for it is not to me that you must atone for them. You have promised to renounce your former follies;—time only, and your future actions, will prove your conversion to be a sincere one.—The present urgency of both our situations demands immediate decision, and will not brook delay. As to the nature of our plans, let us steer for the coast of Great Britain:—believe me, it is the safest and the best direction.'

"'But to what part adjacent?' asked I, confounded and dismayed at the suggestion; for I thought of the Braganza family, and trembled at the sound of England.

"'To that part of the coast contiguous to the Norfolk boundary,' replied he, 'twelve leagues distant from the western part of the cliffs of Cromer.'

"The cliffs of Cromer!' answered I; 'I knew them well. I have a fatal cause to remember them. Ah, would to Heaven this

heart were as guiltless and free as when my eyes first encountered the beauteous white cliffs of lovely Cromer!—But do you imagine this to be a place of security for men like us, captain?

“To which he replied:—

“You will find it so: this part of the coast being frequented only by poor fishermen, who subsist on the products of their toil, and seek no other means. They are the sons of poverty and ignorance: in such wretched circumstances, and so unacquainted with men of your way of life, that they know not the use of arms. Their little cockle-boat and fishing-tackle comprise the whole of the treasure they possess; their wife and children constitute their home of happiness and the sum total of their ambition; returning to whom, heavily laden with their industrious gains, they sit contented by a cheerful fire, regale themselves with a pipe of tobacco, kiss the chubby rogues that lip out the name of father; and, when they stretch their weary limbs on the humble bed that Providence has provided for them, sink into balmy and refreshing slumbers, unconscious, and therefore undesirous, of a happier or a more enviable lot.”

“Lady, I was overpowered by this description which the captain had given of the harmless lives of these happy, honest fishermen; and, contrasting it with my own, could not support the heart-wounding reflection, that I had rendered myself unworthy even of the fellowship and society of these wretched sons of poverty;—whose humble virtues had exalted them, while I, debased by vice, though possessed of wealth, had sunk so far beneath them.

“‘You tremble and turn pale, Michello,’ observed Captain Singleton; ‘wherefore are you thus moved?’

“‘Ah, Sir,’ replied I, ‘do you imagine that I can have listened to you with cold unfeeling apathy, or that I do not bitterly lament the hour when the evil Genius that presides over the wicked thoughts of men tempted me to adopt my late abandoned course of life? I had been honest still but for——’

“‘But for your not imploring the aid of that Power which is superior to all!’ uttered the captain with impressive warmth and energy.—‘There is no Genius can pervert or counteract the influence breathed into our souls by a perfect reliance on *Him*:—

but, forsaking this firm basis, we fall, and inevitably perish, not by the superiority of any greater power opposed to His, but from our own weakness, which draws that evil upon us. Let us hope, however, Michello, that these terrors will subside when time shall have drawn a veil over the past, and matured your virtuous resolutions.—I will now state to you my reasons for wishing you to adopt the instructions I have given you. Near to this eastern part of the coast stand the mouldering remains of an antiquated old Abbey, built in the early reign of Queen Mary, at the expense of a body of monks, the superior of whom bequeathed his riches to the holy brotherhood for the purpose of erecting this structure in honour of his memory. Her Majesty having granted permission, no opposition was of course made to the design; and the monks having completed it under the authority of so august a personage, reposed in undisturbed tranquillity for a considerable length of time; but the feudal wars which so suddenly broke out discontinued their repose, and the spirit of bigotry which was so fatally practised in those infatuated days disordered the community so much, that the utmost anarchy and confusion prevailed;—so that the monks were at last driven from their so long consecrated sanctuary, and obliged to seek a protection in a less dangerous country. These pious men seemed, indeed, to have regarded the body as well as the soul; for when they deserted the cloisters of this holy sanctuary, and betook themselves to flight, they did not neglect the means of providing for their temporal well-being, and stripped the Abbey of every valuable it possessed, not a vestige remaining of the ornaments with which the riches and liberality of its founder had so magnificently adorned it.—At their desertion, it became the prey of the opposite party, and the resort of licentious, profligate, and abandoned outcasts of society; and no means being taken to preserve its original appearance from decay, it fell year after year into a mere mouldering pile, the hand of violence having entirely defaced the arts which were once used to display the architectural skill of man.

“ ‘ In this mutilated and ruinous state, a wretched monk of the Holy Order of St. Francis fled to it for refuge; and many resorted to see this holy man, who it was said possessed the power of

divination.—In an age of bigotry, when superstition prevailed almost universally, the story gained credibility and belief; and the wants of Father Marco were liberally supplied by those who believed in his faith:—among whom was a distant branch of my own family, who possessed some influence even at court, and who, very quickly conveying his fame to the ear of royalty, it was reported that a branch of the reigning family visited him privately in the dilapidated Abbey, and was so well pleased with the discourse of the monk that orders were instantly given to have his wretched abode rendered more comfortable, and all the necessities of life provided for him through means of the Lady Singleton. At the death of Father Marco, his secluded habitation fell into the possession of the Singleton family; part of the cloisters remaining a ruin, and the other part, which had been repaired for the holy father, still continuing to be the abode of wretched refugees even down to the period of the death of Lady Singleton. The place subsequently became the property of my great grandfather, and descended successively, till at length it has become mine, Michello; and five years ago I paid a visit to the dreary pile, but a small portion of which appeared in a state of preservation, excepting such as had undergone repairs by some of the former representatives of the house of Singleton.

“ Yet I slept three nights in this ancient sanctuary, then inhabited, by my permission, by a poor falconer and his numerous family, to whom, when I set out for Denmark, I gave instructions, which doubtless he has fulfilled, for rendering it habitable, in the probability of my returning thither. Michello, I will choose it for my retreat, and give you the accommodation of this old Abbey for you and your confederates, on *one condition only*:—and that is, that no sacrilegious deed be committed within its walls. No victim dragged there by cruelty; and no property secreted there belonging to any of your band. They may banquet, but they shall not repose, within this holy sanctuary. Let the ship be the proper abode of these bold, daring, and adventurous men. But remember that I do not exclude your wife, your mother, or yourself,” added Captain Singleton. “ We will make your mother house-keeper, and your wife mistress, of our abode, for which let us stop

immediately ; my correspondents have furnished me with the supplies for which I had occasion, and the sooner we depart from this coast the better.'

" With this proposal you may well suppose, lady, that I most willingly complied ; giving orders to the men, at break of morning, to get the ship under weigh, and to steer for the British Channel.—No further intelligence, not even to Manfreda or Haerac, did I think it proper to convey :—but having conducted Marinetta, my mother, and Captain Singleton, on board, we were presently under the most active preparation for setting sail and heaving up our anchor. The wind blowing directly favourable to our wishes, we met with no impediment to delay our voyage, or prevent our landing on the British coast, to which we made advances with the utmost caution and circumspection. Keeping the vessel as far out to sea as possible, without being at a distance inconvenient for our purpose, the captain and I went to explore the ruins of the old Abbey, which long before had risen majestically on our view ; and on our nearer approach a glimmering light sent forth its feeble rays, certainly not to invite, but to dissuade the passing traveller from entering walls so gloomy.

" ' It is still inhabited by the poor falconer,' cried Captain Singleton, as he touched a rusty bell which hung over the mutilated entrance ; and a grey-headed man instantly appeared.

" ' What, honest Jacques, thou art living still in this dreary pile,' said the captain, at the sound of whose voice the old man started with involuntary surprise, while with an air of reverence he exclaimed :—

" ' Alas, your honour ! I crave pardon ; my eyes are dim with grief as much as with age ; for, since your departure from this coast, I have met with heavy losses, such as my poor old shattered bulk could scarcely bear, but that Providence has tempered the rough gale to the shorn lamb.'

" ' Why, what misfortune has befallen thee, honest Jacques ?' inquired the Captain.

" ' To which the falconer replied :—

" ' Ah, your honour ! I was the grandfather of three of the finest youths that ever the summer sun smiled upon, before you went

away from the old Abbey: but they are now no more. They went to sea, and perished on their first voyage. My daughter, the darling and pride of my old age, fell a victim to a lingering disease, and died soon afterward.—But even all this, your honour, was not the sum total of my heavy afflictions.—I lost my poor old dame;—the partner of my youthful days;—the wife that brightened the winter of my declining ones! She too is gone, your honour, and has left me a sheer hulk, and the sooner I am laid under the hatches the better.’

“The poor old man hastily wiped a tear that flowed down his furrowed cheek, and I could perceive that the eyes of the Captain were not dry.

“‘Jacques,’ ejaculated he, ‘the Will of Heaven be done! however hard the conflict, we must endeavour to bear it.—Here is money for thee, and thou shalt have a home in the old Abbey so long as thou art spared to enjoy it. I have brought friends hither, who have come from a far distant country, and you must make them welcome.—So, the old Abbey stands where it did when I left it:—but your accommodation for my guests is, I fear, only indifferent.’

“‘Why truly, your honour, the building doth want some repairs;’ cried Jacques, with a faint smile: ‘but my poor old dame and I have kept it in order as well as we could. The green-dragon chamber is well enough, only that the old tapestry is *beginning* to fall in pieces.’

“‘And will probably soon make an *ending*,’ cried the Captain, smiling in his turn.

“Suffice it to say, lady, that from this very night the old Abbey became the retreat of Michello, and the ‘Bold Buccaneer’ the residence of my confederates, whose conduct therein for a considerable length of time merited the protection of Captain Singleton; and Manfrida and Hasrac were at last appointed as attendants in the Abbey, from which the Captain frequently made excursions to Cromer.—I never accompanied him, for I trembled to approach beyond the boundaries of the cliffs, lest any inhabitant might recollect some vestige of my person, and betray me to the Duke of Braganza, whom I still hated and still feared.”

"And was this a mark of your repentance, Paulo, for past offences?" exclaimed our heroine, with a look which called a deep crimson into the countenance of the too-conscious Michello. "Alas! had not your insatiate revenge toward my poor father yet abated?"

He replied:—

"No, lady! it had *not*, for I still remembered the *blow* he had given me—and thirsted for the power of vengeance, which I had shortly an opportunity of fully satisfying.—It was on one stormy evening that the absence of Captain Singleton had been unusually long from the old Abbey: the winds blew a hurricane, and I became alarmed for his safety.

"‘Let us go in search of the brave Singleton!’ cried Manfrida, ‘for belike he will be stranded on the rocks if he stays out to-night;—the d——l himself could not weather out such a tempest.’

Where is Dick Wildfire?’ demanded I, ‘let him heave out the jolly-boat; he shall go with us.’

"‘It would be a sight worth seeing to catch Dick on board, when there is fish to fry on shore: Dick has been on the prow ever since he found the sea-gulls flapping their wings against the sails. He is on the look-out, and when once that is the case, the d——l himself, cannot stop him.’ Manfrida uttered these expressions with a look and manner which at that moment I could not define.

"‘That ugly dog will one day be the means of bringing us into trouble,’ cried I, highly provoked at his being absent when his services were so essentially necessary; for this fellow was one of the ablest seamen among the whole crew. ‘He is always poking his nose somewhere out of the way when he is wanted to mind his business: and you, Manfrida, ought not to have suffered him to leave the ship without my permission.’

"‘Sir,’ answered he, with a surly frown, ‘your confederates are not slaves though they have sworn obedience to your commands. This is the land of liberty; no man is a slave when he sets his foot on British ground.’

"There was something in this speech that I liked not, but I had

no time to consider on the dangerous tendency it would have in perverting the minds and duty of the men then under my command. I thought only of the danger of my invaluable friend, if he was this night exposed to the fury of the stormy weather ; and, muffling myself up as well as I could with my watch-coat, I hastened the men out with the boat, and with two seamen and Manfrida launched it into the bosom of the ocean, and steered for the cliffs of Cromer ; leaving Hasrac to keep a careful look-out at the old Abbey during the time that I should be absent.

“ ‘By St. Peter, there will be some tight wrecks before the morning,’ cried Manfrida, taking a quid of tobacco. ‘I warrant that Dick has been feathering his nest already ; there’s a smartish breeze blows strong from the eastward ; and if a vessel goes to the shore, it is all up with her, and I would not give a rotten rope’s yarn for the lives of all that are on board of her.—Helm-a-weather, Jack ! have you a mind to float us ?’

“ ‘There is surely a sail at a distance,’ observed I ; ‘pull away, my hearties, and let us hail her if we can.’

“ ‘Avast, captain !’ cried Manfrida, who was at this moment guiding the helm : ‘there’s a breaker coming that will finish our business if we don’t mind, and keep a sharp look-out for ourselves. Helm-a-lee, Jack ; what the devil is the fool’s head about ?’

“ At this moment, lady a tremendous sea washed over us ; and I now began to feel some apprehensions that I had rashly exposed my own life, and those of my companions, to the most imminent peril, without the slightest probability of effecting the preservation of Captain Singleton : nor were my uncomfortable sensations rendered more pleasing by the increased darkness of the atmosphere and the continued raging of the tempest ; and, relying more on the skill and dexterity of Manfrida, who was a most experienced mariner, than on the feeble knowledge I possessed myself of the watery elements, I suffered him to guide the helm at his own discretion, and to steer the boat to whatever part of the coast he might think best for the immediate safety of our lives.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"She looks, methinks of old Acasta's line!
The soften'd image of my noble friend!
And art thou, then, Acasta's dear remains,
She whom my gratitude has sought,
And sought so long in vain!"

"THOSE, lady, who have never been exposed to the fury and contending warfare of the angry elements, or never viewed the sea but in a calm, can form little notion of a tempest in its utmost violence, from which no relief is to be expected but from the timely interposition of Almighty Providence. Such a storm it was which at last reduced us in anticipation to the necessity of seeking safety even on the very rocks whose foaming aspect threatened us with immediate destruction if we approached nearer, while the surge, dashing with resistless fury, almost overpowered every effort that we made to save our feeble bark and ourselves from being buried in the bosom of the remorseless deep. Never had I seen so fearful a tempest, nor ever beheld Manfrida so intimidated: though he had a lion's heart the sense of the present danger had operated even upon him, and, struggling with main force for self-preservation, he exclaimed,—

"'Avast, Jack! keep her off the rocks! pull to the left, my hearty! lower, boy, lower! down with the sail!—gently, tack about; pull in, or by St. Peter we shall be food for the fishes, before we can cry *Jack Robinson*!—Now we have it—Helm-ah-lee!—Bravo, Jack! weather the breaker, and we shall make to shore as clean as a whistle!"

"From these unconnected sentences, gasped rather than spoken by the still undaunted and vigorous helmsman, I could perceive that if we once weathered the rocks which so fearfully opposed us on every side, we might reach the land in safety, and that even our boat might be spared from the merciless waves, which now dashed over us with the most appalling violence: there were, indeed, moments in which I could neither see, nor hear the voice of my companions, whom I expected every instant finally

to lose sight of amidst the overwhelming billows, and that they would shortly share with me what seemed to be inevitable to us all—a watery grave!—But it was not so destined, lady! for a few minutes brought us once more on *terra firma*, though greatly exhausted with the danger and exertion we had undergone, and scarcely able to drag our benumbed limbs to a part of the coast eligible for our security. The night was so dark that we could espy no habitation in which we might find a shelter from the continued pelting of the storm, dry our drenched garments, or warm our frozen limbs; for even the keg of brandy which Manfrida had stowed away in the boat was, in the terror and hurry of the moment, forgotten by us all; and how long we should have remained in this forlorn condition I know not, had not some poor fishermen, who like us had been exposed to the fury of the tempest, been journeying homewards.

“ ‘What ho, my masters!’ uttered one of them, ‘belike Davy has cast you up, and given you another chance for life, as well as the rest of us!’

“ We acknowledged that we had just grappled our boat, and hauled it to shore; were entire strangers on the coast, and were there in search of some friendly habitation that would give us a shelter, were it only to warm our frozen limbs; that we had money to reward any one for such accommodation as they could procure for us, and hoped that, if in their power, they would not refuse it in so hard an extremity.

“ To which the same fisherman replied,—‘Why, what the d—l do you mean by all this palaver? when a man knows his duty he don’t want to be put in mind of it, I promise you. The first duty is a feeling of humanity when we see a fellow-creature in distress; and the next is, to get him out of it. Now for the matter of your giving me any money for only doing what I ought to do, avast there, my jolly masters, for I will have none of it. There may be bribery on this side of the grave, but there’s none on the other, remember that:—so here, wet your whistle, shake your feathers, and after that we’ll be jogging on to where you shall have a comfortable roost, a good fire to warm your noses, plenty of victuals to fill your bellies, and a fisherman’s hearty welcome

into the bargain. Come, masters, stir you pegs, or belike the winds will send us back to Davy Jones* again, not quite so kindly mayhap as they blowed us to shore.'

"Without offering thanks, which had already proved so offensive to these hardy sons of labour and humanity, we followed them to the cabins to which they had so unceremoniously invited us; and where we found, indeed, every thing that they had represented to be there: namely, a good fire and a most excellent repast, prepared by their wives and daughters, and for which I could not prevail upon them to accept in exchange one farthing.

" 'Why, what do you take us for?' cried our host, who I perceived was the father of the two young fishermen who accompanied us to the cabin; '*Sharks*, belike; but we don't live by sharking, my jolly masters! the bread we eat is honest, and therefore it is sweet: while many have twice as much, but what does that signify, when it do taste so plaguey bitter? A man might as well have so much wormwood in his mouth, as a morrel got by foul ways!'

"Manfrida and I, at this observation of the honest fisherman, exchanged looks not very pleasing or consolatory to our feelings, well knowing if our real characters were once guessed at by our host, that we should stand a chance of being treated as roughly as we had before been entertained hospitably: and, to change the conversation, I inquired, with an air of seeming indifference, on what part of the coast we had so fortunately landed: to which he answered,—

" 'On the Cliffs of Cromer. You are not a gunshot from the mansion of our noble lord, the Duke of Braganza, who, (Heaven bless him with long life and happiness!) is the father of poor fishers, that can't keep themselves;—for, when there is no fish to be had in the sea, there is always plenty of bread for us up at the Castle:—and the Duchess, she is main kind too, and though she be so mortal beautisome and young, she be as free and as considerate to us poor folks as——

"I would not wait for the conclusion of the fisher's sentence,

* Davy Jones.—A name given to the sea by mariners.

my curiosity to hear something more of the Braganza family being insatiate.

“ ‘ Young and beautiful, my honest friend !’ repeated I ; ‘ you are surely under some mistake, for however young and beautiful the Duchess may *have been*, that time is past. She is now, you know, considerably advanced in years.’

“ ‘ The d—l she is !’ answered he ; how do you make that out, my jolly master ? for, by the claw of a lobster and the tail of a herring, I think she hath not yet seen twenty summers, and is as lovely a lady as ever my eyes beheld. There is not her fellow in all the country round for a delicate shape :—though a body would have thought that the little one she has got now would have put it out of sorts.’

“ ‘ Now,’ cried I, ‘ I begin to understand you ;—so I suppose the Duke is married, and his lady has lately brought him an heir.’

“ ‘ You are pretty much in the right there,’ cried the fisherman, ‘ only it happens to be a girl instead of a boy : no matter, our noble master will be as fond of one as he would have been of t’other ; a child is a child all the world over, and when he comes home, what rejoicings there will be at the castle !

“ ‘ What, the Duke is absent then,’ observed I, exulting in the thought that this hated and so greatly envied man was again separated from his beauteous wife ;—‘ and has never seen his child ?’

“ ‘ No, but he is expected home every hour,’ replied the fisherman, surveying me for the first time with some symptoms of curiosity ; and, turning on me a look as I thought of suspicion, he bluntly added,—

“ ‘ But pray, Sir, why do you ask that question ? If you have yourself any knowledge of the Duke’s family, which it appears you seem to have, why do you ask me so many particulars ?’

“ I own I had been off my guard ; for my countenance had too evidently betrayed to the honest fisherman a demoniacal expression, which had suddenly seized upon my features. There was but one remedy, then, that I could adopt to repair this evil, and that was by immediately professing myself to be a warm and passionate admirer of the man whom I both feared and hated. Ac-

cordingly, smoothing my face into a texture of smiling hypocrisy, I exclaimed,—

“ ‘ It is because I have been long absent from this country that I have been ignorant of the marriage of the noble Duke, and of the pleasing event which has succeeded it, and that I asked you aught concerning him. I was suddenly surprised by your intelligence ; no one honours the illustrious Duke more, or can better appreciate his excellence and merits than I do. So, with your leave, my worthy host, we will drink long life and prosperity to him and his beauteous lady ;—not forgetting the future successor of his illustrious house,’ proceeded I smiling—‘ the infant heiress of Braganza !’

“ ‘ With every vein in the heart of a fisherman, replied he, swallowing the contents of a large earthen pitcher filled with some excellent home-brewed ale. In the meanwhile his old dame made up two beds, myself occupying one, and Manfrida and his companion the second. In short, the hospitality and the kindness of the honest fisherman and his industrious family merited our warmest thanks, and might have served as a lesson to those in a more exalted station ; who, though blessed with affluence, often deny means of relief to their suffering fellow-creatures. As the tempest had considerably abated during the course of the night, the return of morning presented a calm unruffled sky, and tranquil ocean ; the billows had ceased to roar, the winds were hushed to silence, and, though suffering much anxiety for the uncertain fate of my friend, I consoled myself with the hope that he had found some shelter in the neighbourhood of Cromer during the tempestuous and stormy weather : and, not thinking it prudent or safe to sojourn much longer in the cabin of the fisherman, or trust the boat to the investigation of strangers, lurking about the sea-coast, I suggested to Manfrida the absolute necessity there was for his instantly putting her out to sea and making off for the old Abbey with the utmost expedition.—Besides, I was aware of the apprehensions which Marinetta and my mother were enduring for my safety, and felt anxious to relieve them ; on which Manfrida said,—

“ ‘ And pray, captain, what is to become of you ? do you think it quite prudent to hazard your own safety, and that of all your

confederates, merely out of friendship to Captain Singleton ? who if he had been wise, had not left his roost at the old Abbey to thrust himself into the way of danger : and I say it is a burning shame for him to have put you to so much trouble already on his account."

" ' Silence ! ' uttered I, in a voice of thunder, ' not a word against Captain Singleton, to whose kindness you owe your present security. Remember that but for him you would not now have had a place wherein to hide your heads ; nor will I again repeat to you, that with respect to Captain Singleton my commands must be obeyed ; I must go in quest of him, and see that he is in safety, ere you will again behold me at the Abbey. '

" ' And when may that be ? ' surlily demanded Manfrida.

" ' I cannot tell, ' replied I, in an impatient tone, ' speed you to the boat, bear off to the Abbey, and interrupt me with no further unnecessary interrogations. '

" ' And what message are we to carry to our good mistress ? ' inquired he, in a tone of subdued anger, which he did not dare to express by words : ' belike she will think your absence long. '

" ' She may think what she pleases, ' returned I, ' I was not born to be the slave of a woman. Begone, the hour is waxing late, the tide is up, and it is time that our boat were launched into the bosom of the ocean. '

" My commands were instinctively though unwillingly obeyed ; and I no sooner beheld the departure of these dangerous associates from the fisher's cabin, than I myself arose and bade farewell to my worthy host, whom with much difficulty I prevailed on to accept of a tobacco-pouch, (which I had plentifully supplied with tobacco before I had left the Buccaneer, and by mere accident retained in my pocket,) to keep as a remembrance for my sake. At the moment of my departure I again pressed him to take money for the accommodation he had so kindly afforded to me and my sea-drenched companions ; but this the honest fisher peremptorily and angrily refused, alleging that he had only done his duty, and would do it again and again, whenever he was called upon to perform it in the hour of necessity. With these words he bade me farewell, having pointed out to me the nearest path to the cliffs

of Cronier ;—for I had informed him of the nature of my errand there, and that I was determined to leave no hole or corner unexplored, without endeavouring every where to gain intelligence of my friend, for whose safety I had endured and was still enduring such considerable anxiety and torturing suspense :—and with this elucidation of my feelings the honest fisherman seemed perfectly satisfied, and I quitted the cabin without the slightest suspicion being formed of my real situation or character.

“ But alas, Lady, it was neither compassion for the probable fate of my friend, nor any impulse of humanity, which at this moment guided my wayward destiny to the cliffs of Cronier ! I thought not of the brave Singleton, nor indeed of any being under the created canopy of Heaven, save only your mother, your beautiful mother ! who, under the auspices of the Dowager Duchess of Braganza, might be again the guiltless object of her machinations and mine, if I choose to put them into execution as prompt as the design.

“ ‘ So,’ said I to myself, ‘ the haughty Duke has at last proclaimed publicly his marriage with his lovely Florentine : which the succeeding event that has taken place rendered it impossible any longer to conceal ; and he is now the most blest and enviable of mankind, while I am the most wretched and accursed by my presumptuous folly and ambition.—I too must perchance be conducted to the fatal spot at which I was seduced from the path of rectitude and principle, and fell :—and shall I not revenge that fall, while the means of vengeance are left within my power ?—do I not at this moment feel the hand that aimed a blow at my heart ?—and shall I not aim one at his in return, when I can redress the wrong so easily, and with such certainty of success ?—yes, by the God of my fathers, I will !’

“ Thus impelled by rage, by jealousy, and by all the burning sensations of a man possessed by the foul serpent who envied the happiness of the first fond pair, I had the audacity once more to enter the mansion of the illustrious master whose goodness I had so treacherously abused ; and with all the effrontery of a bold-faced villain, inquired for the Dowager Duchess of Braganza, to whom I had immediate access. She started at the first sight of me, but

I could perceive that it was not with symptoms of disgust, and that the meeting on both sides was of a nature in some degree agreeable.

“ ‘ Paulo Michello,’ uttered her Grace with a complacent smile, but at the same time full of terrible meaning! ‘ I am already apprised of your situation, which accident revealed to my knowledge.—Your profession is known to me, and to *me only*, Paulo Michello! nay start not, nor tremble; you have been pirating on the high seas, and one of your confederates, most unfortunately for *you*, has been pirating *on land*! deny the accusation with an honest face, if you can!’

“ ‘ Of the last accusation I will solemnly declare my innocence,’ replied I, an almost overwhelming trepidation seizing my whole frame; ‘ to the former, most unhappily for myself, I must plead guilty. I have indeed become connected with desperate men, but I have, personally, abstained from plunder. Lives I have spared, but I never endangered any.’

“ ‘ Föbl, dotard, blockhead! would you think to blind *me* with this hypocritical whining?’ cried the Duchess, casting on me a look of the most contemptuous disdain; ‘ You are a villain!—though you have not the courage to be a bold-faced one, and would insinuate that you are only *half* given over to vice. Now tell me the difference, I pray you, between decided knavery, and irresolute, ever-wavering principle. Can you answer me that question?—no, you cannot. However, I willingly spare you from further confession; but be aware, Michello, that I am in the possession of circumstances, the disclosure of which would overwhelm you with immediate destruction.—At the same time I have the power of protecting you, and on certain conditions I assuredly will do so: but do not strive to assume the appearance of virtue, while you bear the semblance of guilt so strongly about you, for it will not do with those who know you better. You say you have not enriched yourself with the property of another, or endangered the life of a human creature. It is false, Paulo Michello!—for you have done both, by the sanction you have given to others for committing such deeds of atrocity. What though your hand was withheld from pointing the blow—you permitted it to fall, and the

victim perished:—and that permission is the same as though the deed were committed by you. If we countenance evil deeds, we are deserving of equal punishment with the perpetrator of the crime! and if you shared in the spoils of your confederates, you are not the less culpable because their hands alone, literally speaking, committed the theft. You have, then, placed yourself on a level with these men, and, sharing their crime, must expect the punishment thereof. Now, Paulo Michello, the case is this, and it will be vain to endeavour to disguise your real situation or present mode of life from my investigation, for the very place of your retreat is known to me. The ruin of a mouldering Abbey is where you have secreted your band; the possessor of which is now in a far distant country: beware of his return to his native land, for he is a gentleman of character and principle, by name Singleton, the last man in the world who would countenance your nefarious practices or proceedings; a brave officer is Singleton, who has fought in the service of his king and country, and would not shelter his own brother if he thought him guilty of unworthy actions. This old Abbey I repeat belongs to him;—and although but a mouldering ruin, he will make claim to it as his property when he returns to England.'

“ ‘And has your Grace any further knowledge of this so greatly to-be-dreaded soldier?—did you ever behold him, or *have you beheld him lately?*’ uttered I, not doubting but that this false and treacherous friend had betrayed my life, and the lives of the whole of my confederates, into the power of justice. I was however confounded by a reply quite contradictory to the suggestion I had just formed, in which her Grace positively declared, that she had never beheld Captain Singleton in the whole course of her existence, and believed him to be at that moment sojourning in a far distant land, somewhere on the borders of Italy.

“ ‘Then by whom am I betrayed?’ distractedly exclaimed I, for the intelligence of the Duchess had nearly bereft me of my senses; ‘some treacherous villain has played me falsely, and I do beseech your Grace to reveal his name.’

“ ‘That I am not permitted to do; I have sworn faithfully to keep it secret;’ replied her Grace. ‘But has not one of your

band played the truant lately? and, truly, to some end would he have turned his absence had he escaped detection. Thrice has he attempted, to no purpose, a robbery in the castle of Montault, and the last time was fortunately prevented from a possibility of getting off by the vigilance of my servants; who, having secured him in their custody, retained him all night, and in the morning the miscreant was brought before me. Greatly intimidated by my threats, he on his knees implored for life and liberty, alleging in extenuation (as he seemed to think) of the daring outrage he was about to commit, that he had accomplices who lived by the nefarious depredations they made on the property of others; that they were a large body of men, in conjunction with whom he was now acting; and that if he brought not booty with him when he returned to the place of their concealment, he should be reproached and severely punished for not having added to their ill-gotten stores, and expelled as being a useless member of their society; adding to all this, that he was willing even to reveal the name of the Captain, provided his own safety was not endangered by such a confession.

“‘Dismissing all witnesses to this close investigation of the situation of the trembling wretch,’ continued the Duchess, ‘from the apartment where he had been brought for examination, for reasons of a most potent nature, I said, ‘What, then, you are a band of pirates, or robbers, or something of that description?’ ‘We are both!’ answered he; ‘we are pirates on the high seas, and robbers on the high land, wherever we can find an opportunity favourable for our purposes; and have neither spared sex nor age in the regular routine of our daring profession. Our Captain, to be sure, is somewhat chicken-hearted, and pretends to have fine feelings about humanity and all such-like; but, by St. Peter, I never found that he had any dislike to fingering of the cash after it was once got, though obtained even by shedding the blood of a human creature! I always marked that, and that he feasted at the banquet, and enjoyed the sport, with as good an appetite as any of us; for all his palavar about *humanity* and so forth, he had as little cause to boast of that in his composition as any of our crew!’

“ ‘Hear you not this, Paulo Michello? This is the attachment of one of your own sworn confederates, and this the favourable estimate he chose to give of the merits of his worthy Capitan, whose name I next demanded, promising him not only pardon for his individual offence, but assuring him that I had no intention of betraying him or any of his crew, provided they kept their own secret, and refrained from making further depredations upon the coast. To conclude, I offered him a reward to deliver up the name of his Captain, and the place of his concealment, nor was I much surprised to find that he could not resist the temptation of gold, nor more astonished that *Paulo Michello* was discovered to be the leader of the band. Truly I suspected as much when you departed with the five thousand pounds I deposited in your hands on condition that you would espouse her whom I still believed to be Agatha Delcrusa. You knew at the time that she was no longer so, having seen her led to the altar by my son many months before. This circumstance you perfidiously concealed from my knowledge at the very time that the disclosure would have contributed so highly to the repose of my wounded mind; and you were twice a traitor to your master as well as to me. You were treacherously false to both of us; and you would look queer, Mr. Paulo Michello, were I now to impeach you for it, and to draw from your coffers the money which you obtained in so fraudulent a manner, knowing, as you did, that you were not able to accomplish the purpose for which it was given you. At the return of the Duke, whose service you as treacherously quitted, though he was so kind and indulgent a master, the situation of my daughter-in-law could no longer be concealed, and he avowed his marriage with Agatha two months before the birth of his eldest-born, which was a son. That child, thank heaven, lived but a few months to enjoy the privileges of his exalted birth, and Agatha long pined over the death of the to-me unwelcome little stranger, who would, had he survived, succeeded to the title and rich domains of the house of Braganza.’

“ ‘And is there no danger of a *second* representative being born still, to inherit these rich domains?’ cried I, exulting at the disappointed prospects of this most ambitious lady—equally unworthy as a woman, as I knew myself to be as a man.’

"She furiously replied—'Alas, that dreaded event has already arrived, and frustrated every expectation of my grandson, Montague Montault, becoming the future heir of Braganza; for when Orlando again departed to see his brother-in-law, the Marquis of Montault, in Italy, he left his young Duchess, (I grieve that I *must* call her so) advanced in a state of pregnancy, and she has since brought forth a daughter, the image of her father; and the little brat, unlike that sickly and delicate first-born, thrives prodigiously, and is likely to live to the total frustration of all my hopes and wishes. The daughter of the now more than ever hated Florentine is, apparently, in a fair state of becoming the future heiress of the illustrious House of Braganza.'

"'But are there not means to crush that bold aspiring hope?' uttered I, inspired with the most horrible thought that had ever entered the imagination of mortal man, and stung alternately with rage and jealousy at the happiness of the transported pair. "The blossom is but young, and tender buds will the sooner chance to wither, nay expire, if——'

"I stopped to gaze at this moment, on the half-reluctant, yet more than half-willing, auditor of my base suggestions: and perceived how greedily she devoured up my discourse; one moment deeply blushing at the reproach of her own conscience, and the next flushed with a yet more vivid glow as she contemplated the full completion of all her hopes and wishes in the destruction of the lovely Florentine and her helpless infant. At length she exclaimed,—

"'Not so, Michello, if I understand you rightly; I would not have the creature perish, though I wish her eternal separation from the embraces of my son. The brat too must never know to whom she owes her being.'

"On which I quickly replied, not giving her a moment's time for serious reflection,—

"If I understand *you* rightly, lady, there is but *one way* of preventing the Duchess and her child from ever again possessing any claim on the affections of your son. I will not do the deed myself, and must ensure a high reward for its execution:—provided that you never betray to mortal ear the place of my security in the ruins of the old Abbey, or the nature of my profession, or that of

any of my confederates ;—sweat this, lady, and I will get Dick Wildfire to—'

" 'To remove both mother and child far beyond the reach of inquiry,' vociferated the Dowager, whose countenance at this moment shone with an expression of the most malignant fury.

" 'Far as the bottomless abyss of the ocean ! beyond the depth of the boundless sea !' answered I, equally aroused to the fury of revenge ; 'a cradle and a pillow shall both be prepared to seal the beauteous eyes that never more shall wake to opening.

" 'Your oath lady ! the sum of your reward, and your wishes are accomplished. The Florentine shall sleep in sound and sweet repose, the infant, too, as sweetly. Name the appointed day, the appointed hour, with the conditions I have stated.'

" 'And thinkest thou I would give my oath, or grant those conditions, before I have secured thy good faith ?' cried the Dowager ; full twenty years to come, should'st thou reveal this tale, thou diest Paulo ! thou and thy confederates—*all* ! for your lives are within my power, and mine only ! Swear thou then to be true, and in return ten thousand pounds are yours, with my inviolate oath of secrecy !'

" Transported by mention of this rich reward, which satisfied the utmost extent of my ambition, I threw myself at the feet of this demoniac woman, and took the oath, but bade her remember that she must not expect the execution of the design to be performed by the hands of Paulo Michello ; and that if perchance the mother and the child were saved, (as I had pre-determined that they should be,) she must not attribute the failure of the plan to me, but to accident alone, which was inseparable from so hazardous an undertaking.

" 'Tis enough that you see it done, and do not again deceive me,' exclaimed the Duchess, placing a casket which contained the purchase of the lives of the Florentine and her infant daughter in my hand. 'On the peril of your life, Paulo, be faithful to your trust : or if, as you say, any chance should impede the progress of your plans, still secure the persons of Agatha and her child from all possibility of escaping from the walls of the old Abbey, should Singleton return to its mouldering ruins.'

“ ‘ I will remove them to a place of greater security,’ quickly rejoined I, fearful of her adding any new stipulation to the fatal contract I had signed in a moment of desperation. ‘ Lady, farewell! when will my services be required?’

“ ‘ In a few days,’ answered the Dowager, ‘ Agatha will set out on her voyage to Italy, by the express commands of the Duke her husband, who is in an invalid state of health, and Orlando wishes me to accompany his wife and child, whom he is so passionately anxious to behold. Now, my affairs will not permit me to accede to this request so immediately, and therefore his pretty minion is to depart without me, and the most active preparations have been some time making for her intended voyage, by order of my silly infatuated Orlando. The most costly apparel has been provided for her and her infant daughter. This may become the treasure of you and your confederates when you arrest her flight; for you are aware it must not return to the Castle of Montault, from which, in a few succeeding months, I shall be absent, with the whole of my establishment. Now, I will cause Agatha to leave the castle when the shades of evening prevent the possibility of distinguishing any objects very perceptibly. With one attendant she shall set out in an open boat, and when immediately under that tremendous cliff which has furnished a watery bed to thousands, advance with your confederates, whomsoever you league with you on this embassy! Neither Agatha, her attendant, or the child will be able to make the slightest resistance. They may utter, indeed, piercing shrieks, but that is all. Nobody will hear them, for there is only an old ruinous Cottage on the top of the Cliff, which no one inhabits! and here you need not fear detection.—How easily there, you know Paulo, may the design be accomplished!’

“ ‘ True, lady,’ uttered I, secretly shuddering at the horrible thought, ‘ it will be then easy, sure enough, to *swamp the boat*, and send the Florentine and her pretty baby to the bottom; and when they are once safely bestowed there, they won’t come back to tell you of it, I warrant me.’

“ The inhuman Duchess expressed her approbation of this observation by a joyous burst of involuntary laughter: at length, resuming her stern ferocity, she exclaimed:—

“ ‘ Or, escaping from this perilous situation by any unexpected means, you will instantly bear them to the ruins of the old Abbey—Paulo Michello, remember your *oath* ! in which the safety of your confederates is implicated as well as your own. Farewell !—by to-morrow’s eve be the destruction of Agatha and her infant daughter certain :—vanish—instantly begone ! some of my domestics are approaching, and the utmost caution is necessary to conceal our plans.’ ”

“ Lady, I had not the courage at the moment to bid this inhuman tigress farewell, or to tarry an instant longer in a place so impregnated with danger ; but, speedily arriving at the sea-coast, I jumped into the boat of a poor fisher, who was going to his accustomed labour, and, requesting that he would give me a passage to the opposite shore, threw him a reward for his trouble, and winged my way once more to the old Abbey, where no one dared to inquire into my proceedings :—not even Marinetta or my mother ever presumed to ask me questions. Much hurt however at the still protracted absence of my friend, whom alone at the same time, I feared to encounter, I deposited my money in my cabinet and hastened on board of the *Buccaneer* ; where the first object I beheld was *Dick Wildfire*, towards whom, though I longed to reproach him for the situation into which he had betrayed me, I was unwilling, from motives of the highest import, to manifest the slightest symptoms of displeasure.

“ It was one of the rules of our society never to exchange words, but signs, when any secret expedition was afoot likely to increase the treasures of our community ; and this was so perfectly understood among us, that I had nothing to do but to give a certain signal, which was instantly conceived, and obeyed in profound silence, and the next day was set apart for my operations. I was agitated beyond description, when the appointed hour drew nigh, and the shades of evening prevailed over the wide expanse of the ocean. Manfrida, Hasrac, and Dick Wildfire, whose assistance I could not do without, were my companions in the boat which bore away for the fatal cliff.

“ ‘ Put on your masks,’ uttered I. ‘ There is a boat bearing for the cliff.—It is our destined prey.—Use no violence with the

boatman,—but seize the contents ; the chests,—but what is still more valuable than all the treasures of the eastern world—the beauteous lady, and the infant child that reposes on her bosom. The attendant may depart in peace, so you secure the lady.’

“ ‘ By St. Peter, but we must make quick work of it, captain !’ uttered Manfrida, ‘ for there is another sail bearing fast upon us.’

“ ‘ Ready !’ cried Dick, pulling along-side of the boat.

“ ‘ Attack !’ vociferated I, in a disguised tone.

“ ‘ Surrender,’ roared out Manfrida.—The screams of the beautiful Florentine and her attendant now rent the air, when the boatman, turning towards her with an air of the most perfect apathy, assured her that he could offer no resistance ; that we were a body of armed men—he believed pirates, and that contention with them was unavailing.

“ ‘ And what seek you ?’ cried the lovely Duchess, turning on us a look of supplication which might have disarmed the fury of the most savage heart ;—‘ if it be treasure, take all that I possess and I will not repine. Remove the chests, you will find them worthy of your acceptance ;—but spare, oh spare this helpless infant at a mother’s panting breast. Some of you have mothers—*had mothers*. Oh, let then this thought induce you to harm me not, nor do this infant wrong. She is my dearer part,—the child, the only child of a dear, dear absent lord.’

“ ‘ Lady, we will neither harm you nor your child, if you will quietly depart with us,’ cried Manfrida, springing into the boat at the same instant : ‘ we will use no force, but on compulsion.’

“ ‘ Compulsion ?’ uttered the frantic Duchess, struggling hard to escape from his grasp : ‘ on what compulsion am I to surrender to you, ye hold, presuming and ferocious men ? and by what authority do you hold me as your prisoner ? have I not given you my property ?’

“ ‘ Which will avail nothing without you, lady,’ cried Manfrida ; ‘ the child too, we must bear it hence, or——’

“ The Duchess uttered a piercing shriek, the attendant joined in the cry of terror, and the boat on the opposite side was gaining fast upon us.

“ ‘ By St. Peter we shall be boarded, captain,’ cried Dick : ‘ there’s two to one against us now, I promise you.’

“‘And all this palaver is only delaying time,’ exclaimed Manfrida. ‘Confound it, captain, are you going to be daunted at the cries of a woman? let her cry and welcome, if she don’t lead us to run the risk of a rope’s yarn being twisted about our necks. Come, pretty one, give me the chicken, whom none of us are going to harm provided you will just step over into our boat, and sit alongside our Captain.’

“Unfortunately for the lovely Duchess, the strong resistance she made, and the incessant screams uttered by her and her attendant, rendered my interference and authority absolutely necessary, or the men would have greatly murmured at my forbearance when they were using every effort in their power to move obediently to my commands. Finding therefore that the rowers in the opposite boat were rapidly advancing toward us, I gave orders instantly to seize on the Duchess and the child, and bear them without further delay to the boat in which I was waiting to receive her: and, though pierced with pangs unutterable at the seeming severity I was obliged to adopt, and on hearing her piteous cries,—yet the urgency of existing circumstances made it impossible to retreat, and I commanded Dick to swamp the boat if the opposite party, which had now nearly approached us, offered any opposition. No sooner had I given this barbarous mandate, which was the only alternative that I could adopt to force the Duchess to compliance, than I heard the voice of Captain Singleton, enjoining us to abstain from further violence on the immediate peril of our lives! and quickly the boat advanced toward us; the Duchess losing not a moment in imploring the protection and assistance of Captain Singleton for herself and child; who instantly exclaimed,—

“‘Hold! I command you to desist from offering further outrage to a helpless woman and her yet more helpless child. Lady, fear nothing! under my protection you are in safety, and, ferocious as these men may seem, I pledge my life that they offer you no harm.’

“‘No, by St. Peter, not a mother’s son of us,’ shouted Manfrida, instantly releasing the snowy arm he had so roughly seized, and resigning it to the captain, to whom I had lately whispered some words perfectly intelligible to him.

“ ‘ Generous man ! and will you indeed protect me ? ’ exclaimed the Duchess, clinging close to his arm.

“ ‘ With my life, lady ! ’ replied he ; ‘ yet such is the peculiarity of circumstances attending your situation here, that my protection will avail but little if you do not resign yourself immediately, and accompany me to the place to which these men were going to conduct you. They are friends of mine, and though they seem rough, have no intention to offer you harm. By those you call your friends, lady, you have been treacherously betrayed. Your returning to them will expose you to more danger, believe me, than you will encounter here.—Be wise, choose the least evil that may befall you : take the only alternative that remains ;—resignation to the will of a Power, superior to that which reposes in the hearts of men, whose hands fall nerveless at his command ! decide, lady, and let us instantly begone.’

“ To which the Duchess after a pause replied :—

“ ‘ I know not who you are, or what you are, but there is something in your manner, Sir, which assures me that I may rely on your protection ; and if indeed it be the will of Heaven that I should thus suffer, and thus be wronged—I will cease to murmur, but endeavour, for the sake of this innocent babe, to bear with the unjust wrongs which have fallen on the devoted head of its unfortunate mother. Permit my attendant to follow whither you are conducting me, and I shall ask no greater favour.’

“ ‘ Assuredly, madam,’ cried Captain Singleton, and without another sentence being exchanged by either of the party, the Duchess suffered him quietly to place her and her attendant in our boat, to which the men had already removed the chests, and, he stationing himself close at her side, I gave instant orders, in an under tone, to bear away for the mouldering ruins of the old Abbey, in a state of mind bordering on distraction ;—the unfailing accompaniment of a consciousness of having committed actions that will not bear the test of reflection.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Hear what Highland Nora said :—

‘The Earlie’s son I *will not wed* !

Should all the race of Nature die,

And none be left but he and I,—

For all the gold, for all the gear,

For all the lands, both far and near,

That ever valour lost or won,—

I would not wed the Earlie’s son !”

“It was not, lady,” continued Paulo, “that I endured any apprehension on my own account, or on that of my confederates ; for I well knew we should never be betrayed by any reports given of the seizure we had made on the young and lovely Duchess of Braganza, since there was not a doubt but the very boatman who had conveyed her to the cliff had been considerably bribed for the passive obedience he had shown in the whole of this treacherous and nefarious transaction. This man, having beheld his lovely burden safely bestowed along-side of us, rowed off with all imaginable speed, as by no means wishing to impede or throw the slightest obstacle in our way to prevent the execution of this daring design : and we had still less to fear from Captain Singleton’s companion in the opposite boat, who, happening to be a mere youth, very quietly sheered off the moment that his boat was rid of his passenger, not caring who or what the altercation had been about, so long as he was paid for his fare. He was but little anxious about the distressed females, whom the devil himself might have run away with, if he pleased. No, Lady ! it was not the sensation of fear that agitated my burning breast, when, arriving at the old Abbey, Captain Singleton (delivering up the Duchess, her child, and attendant to the care of Marinetta and my mother, with strict charge to pay them every kindness and attention,) fiercely demanded to know of me the *actual situation* of my beauteous captive, and for what purpose she was to be detained in the Abbey as my prisoner ?

“‘Paulo Michello,’ said he, in a yet sterner accent than he had hitherto used to me, ‘use no dissimulation with one who will not

brook it, and who has never dissembled towards you.—perhaps, even has gone a step beyond prudence in revealing to you the whole of his concerns. Tell me why you have conducted this lady and her infant child to this solitary spot, amidst the band of your lawless and licentious companions? You say, indeed it was contrary to your inclination, and that you acted on *compulsion*: what compulsion, let me ask, nay demand, induces you to act with violence towards a helpless woman, whose very looks might plead her innocence, and teach the hearts of the most savage among your crew to melt with gentle pity? Paulo Michello, I have hitherto been your friend! your adviser! your instructor!—beware how you make me your enemy:—for I am an avowed enemy to that man, although he were my dearest brother, who would injure the defenceless sex which he was ordained by laws both human and divine to protect!’

“‘It is true, Sir, that I owe you gratitude,’ answered I, much stung by his reproach; ‘but compel me not to remember that *you also* owe some to me. Your life was preserved, through my immediate means, from falling into the hands of your enemies. It is now your turn to preserve mine! which, without this lady and that infant being held my captives, will be delivered up into the hands of justice. One of the men has proved a miscreant, and has betrayed me into the power of the Dowager Duchess of Braganza. That lovely creature, whom we have brought to the old Abbey is the wife of her son, the young Duke Orlando, and the child (their only one) is the infant heiress of his illustrious house. It was the *pious* wish of the grandmother to have exterminated the mortal race of both the mother and the child on this very appointed evening, and I was employed for the purpose of accomplishing this most execrable deed! Yes, I tremble while I pronounce it, that it was intended the boat should have been upset beneath the cliff, and that Agatha and her infant daughter should have floated on the waves!’

“‘And had you the cruelty to make such conditions with this most execrable monster of a woman?’ demanded Captain Singleton. ‘Paulo Michello, I will not suppose it possible that on any terms you would promise to execute so horrible a deed!’

“‘No, Sir, I was not so inhuman,’ answered I, ‘I made a clause by which I did not strictly bind myself, or any other, to the accomplishment of this infernal purpose.’

“‘And yet, if I mistake not,’ cried Captain Singleton, turning on me a stern and inquiring eye, ‘on my nearly coming in contact with your boat, when the cries of that lovely angel pierced every heart save yours alone! then, Paulo Michello, if I mistake not, it was at this fearful moment I heard you give orders to Dick Wild-fire to swamp the boat, which must inevitably have endangered the existence of every human being in it.’”

“‘Believe me, Sir,’ uttered I, ‘it was merely an expedient to force the Duchess to compliance, nothing more. I swear by heaven, her life and that of the infant I would have preserved at the peril of my own. For the wealth of worlds I would not touch that infant with a hand of harm.’

“‘You must henceforth prove that assertion by a stronger testimony than mere words,’ cried Captain Singleton; ‘for neither the mother nor the child will henceforth be under your control. I mean not to betray you, Paulo, or expose your life to danger, or the lives of your confederates; far be it from me to hazard the existence of my preserver! but you cannot expect that I shall tamely witness the wrongs of a lovely helpless injured woman, without offering her both protection and redress, which she will never be able to obtain in this country. It has, or will, no doubt, be represented to the Duke by his base unworthy mother, that his wife and child are dead.’

“‘Restoring them to him, my death will be certain,’ uttered I; and the lives also of my confederates be sacrificed to his revenge.’

“‘In all human probability, such would be a natural consequence, were the transaction once revealed to his knowledge,’ cried Captain Singleton; ‘but fear nothing from me. While I have the power of protecting you, you shall be safe; and from the Dowager you have but little to apprehend.—She will keep her guilty secret, or her own life, which is now in your power, will be the forfeit of her crimes, in having attempted to aim at the destruction of the Duchess and her infant daughter, who, at this mo-

ment, she imagines sleep in the watery bed her goodly care would have provided for them. Now, Paulo, I have but one plan to propose to you to elude the vigilant pursuit of the malignant Dowager : in a few days I shall set off for Denmark ; for I am now at liberty to return again without fear, shame, or remorse at having committed an action disgraceful to humanity. The Count Salsaskie so far from having perished by my hand, has recovered from the wound I gave him in our fatal encounter, and is now perfectly re-established in his health. I received letters from my correspondents which have duly informed me of this fact, and of other circumstances which require my immediate presence in Denmark ; alas, too late, I fear, to prevent my adored Matilda from taking the eternal vow of celibacy, which she has resolved to do in spite of every remonstrance to the contrary. The Baron, her father, is no more, and she is left the sole surviving heiress of his rich domains : but what does this avail, if she should be thus lost to me for ever ? Already has she entered the walls of the holy Sanctuary, and perhaps ere this has taken the veil. It was the serious import of these letters that so long detained me at Cromer, which accident I shall not regret, since it has afforded the opportunity of befriending a lovely and unfortunate woman in the hour of peril. The plan I now propose, Paulo, is, that you immediately depart with me to Denmark, taking the young Duchess and her infant daughter along with us, as also her attendant ; where, in the Convent of the Holy Sisters, under a borrowed name, I will safely bestow her till time shall one day restore her to her husband, without danger of your life, or those of your confederates, being implicated in the discovery. I know of no other expedient to save you from the claws of the Dowager, Paulo, under existing circumstances ; and most gladly, lady, was I disposed to accept of the offered assistance of my once again invaluable monitor and friend ; to whom I imparted the whole history of the lovely Florentine, her private marriage with the Duke Orlando, the Dowager's conduct and treachery on the occasion, with my subsequent reasons for having so suddenly and abruptly abandoned his service, omitting not to mention his friendship, his confidence in me, and his generous kindness ; at the same time not forgetting the *blow* he had given me in the mo

ment of his passion, and which I alleged as the principal cause for my cherishing eternal revenge and hatred towards him.

“ ‘ All that passed, and ten thousand times more, you merited at his hands,’ cried Captain Singleton ; ‘ Paulo Michello, you have acted like a base and treacherous villain ! nor will I flatter you, by sparing you the epithets which your conduct has deserved. There is now only one way for you at all to repair your former offences ; and that is, to preserve the innocent offspring of your much-injured lord, and to protect from future outrage his young and lovely wife. You must solemnly swear to do this ere I will ever consent to trust you more ! and beware, Paulo Michello, how you abuse this sacred oath, the forfeiture of which shall cost you your life !— If you ever more endanger the existence of the future heiress of the House of Braganza, or the safety of her unfortunate mother, that hour will cost you dearly.—Reflect on the nature of this oath, for you must abide by the consequences.’ ”

“ Lady, it was a tremendous oath which Captain Singleton then drew up and dictated to me :—in which I was strictly bound to his service, and to keep the secret of your birth, for eighteen years ; in all which time I was to be near his person and never separated from him for a single day, unless at his own direction. In short, he so settled it that he was never to lose sight of me, and that I was to hold no converse with any human being on the quality of the young Duchess or her infant daughter, who was to pass for his own :—that she was to be called *Agatha Singleton*, and that I was to address her by no other title, unless unforeseen circumstances rendered a disclosure necessary. All this on my trembling knees I solemnly swore to abide by, sealing my faith by one of the most awful and serious oaths I had ever taken in my whole existence ; vowing to consider my life, and the lives of my confederates, forfeit to the power of justice should I depart from my plighted obligation.

“ This being adjusted, not a sentence further passed my lips ;— and I consented to the restrictions he had made without a murmur of complaint ; I agreed to go to Denmark with him also in the character of his servant, and there to abide his further instructions ; but the hardest task I had to achieve was to make myself

known to the young and lovely Duchess of Braganza, to tell her the part which her mother-in-law had acted towards her, and to assure her that she was now protected from the power of any future evil machinations. This I had fully resolved to do on the very first opportunity at which I could gain a moment of uninterrupted conversation with her: but alas, lady, this design was frustrated, as many are, by the peculiar ordination of that Providence whose interposition is never offered in vain; for on the third evening after your beauteous mother had become the inmate of the old Abbey, she was suddenly attacked by a brain fever, which within two hours of her dissolution rendered her insensible of every scene passing around her. Ah, lady! what compunction and remorse then seized on my soul! Had I been possessed of the wealth of worlds, I would have freely bestowed it to have brought returning health to the pale cheek of the suffering invalid. All that I could do to prevent the malady from proving immediately fatal I did; for on its first approach, I flew to obtain medical assistance, and brought a physician with me from the neighbourhood of Cromer, to whom I disguised myself as much as possible from observation, and, depositing in his hand a considerable sum of money as a reward for his trouble, hastened to the bed-side of your suffering parent; where also was stationed my mother; her own attendant; and Captain Singleton, who never quitted her from the moment that he guessed at the danger of her disease, which the physician immediately pronounced would terminate fatally.

“ ‘ All that we can now do,’ uttered he, ‘ will be to restore the suffering patient to a few hours of returning reason; which, with the aid of the medicines I have administered, may probably take place in the course of four and twenty hours; but I am under the painful necessity of informing you, my good friends, that its continuance will not be of long duration, and almost instantly followed by dissolution. A mortification has already taken place; from the rapid progress of the disease, which, although apparently in its early stage, no human means can avert:—nor can medicine, though timely administered, afford the patient any effectual relief. It may indeed for a few short hours protract death, nay, may seem to lessen some part of the violent symptoms which appear; but it will

not, it cannot, rekindle the vital spark, which in her will shortly expire, in despite of all the efforts of human skill !”

“ At this afflicting intelligence, lady, imagine the scene of consternation and confusion which prevailed. Alas ! to me it was the most agonizing sensation I had ever experienced in the whole course of my existence, that I had been at all accessary to reducing this most lovely and amiable of all human beings to so deplorable a situation ! while the generous, warm and feeling heart of Captain Singleton bled almost at every pore. My Marinetta too and my mother were considerably affected, while the heart-rending agony of the almost speechless attendant of the lovely Duchess aggravated our emotions, already acute and painful beyond description !—in addition to all which, the sight of the unconscious and innocent babe (which was yourself lady,) rendered still deeper the torments of anxiety which we endured for the fate of its lovely and unfortunate mother ! for oh, lovely did she still seem, though in sickness and in death.

“ ‘ Since there is now no hope,’ cried Captain Singleton, ‘ let us not quit for a moment this departing angel, that should one ray of returning recollection animate her languid frame, her last requests may be attended to most sacredly. Paulo Michello, it is not necessary that you should be seen,’ added he in a whisper, ‘ your presence would only disturb her dying moments : though I by no means wish you to depart from the chamber ; be near at hand, that you may hear those requests which she will doubtless make (if she has the least dawning of reason) respecting her child.’

“ I did so, lady. Behind a screen, prepared for the purpose, I beheld the last of your beauteous unfortunate mother, as she gently closed her eyes in everlasting sleep ! and shall I ever forget that fearful, that awful, that impressive scene ?—even now is awakened the deep throb of unutterable anguish that she left behind her, when all which remained of that most perfect and lovely form became nothing more than a mere lifeless lump of clay ! God of my fathers ! shall I ever forget when, at the silent hour of midnight, she suddenly ceased from expressing the wild disorder of a bewildered imagination—when her eyes, no longer possessed with a

vacant stare, partook again of their wonted soul-beaming softness—when her voice resumed its usual melody, and no longer spoke in terrors to the guilty soul! She addressed her attendant, who sat weeping by the bedside, and extended her hand toward Captain Singleton, who was absorbed in grief, and stationed on the other side.

“ ‘ Weep only for those,’ exclaimed she, ‘ destined to be miserable; but shed no tear for one who is this night going to sleep with angels.—I am young, and a little while ago thought it a fearful thing to die, because I had a child that I could not take with me to that blessed land of peace! so I raved, and found my head and heart burn outrageously! but shortly after I fell asleep and many angels came and comforted me, and told me that my little one is safe, and that no one will ever harm her! it is a *dream*, but it has refreshed me wonderfully, and I shall rave no more while I am with you; and that won’t be long, shortly I must return to the angels whom I beheld comforting me in my vision. They told me I should soon be with them, and so *I feel I shall!*—What’s o’clock, my friends? Jacqueline, bring to me my little Agatha; sleeping or waking, I would see my child.’

“ The infant, which was indeed in a profound slumber, was instantly brought in by its nurse, and held close to the bosom of its expiring mother.

“ ‘ Bless thee, my child,’ faintly murmured she, for the sight of the babe seemed greatly to agitate her, ‘ and if thy dying mother’s prayers have any avail, thou wilt one day see all thine own injuries and thy mother’s wrongs redressed.—My friends, I am not high-minded, though raised to an exalted rank by my marriage with this child’s father; but it is necessary to inform you on whom you are bestowing your kind attentions, for to your charge must I now leave my helpless babe. I am the wife of Orlando, Duke of Braganza.—This child, and she alone, has a right to inherit the fortunes of that illustrious house.—The Dowager Duchess of Braganza is the mother of my dear lord, from whom she has thus treacherously trepanned me, when I fondly thought I was going to meet my husband.—The suffering proceeding from the terrors which have so suddenly surprised me, has reduced me to the state you

now see.—I would have conquered my feelings, but the conflict has exhausted my weak frame, and my mortal part gives up the contest, while the immortal is rapidly approaching to a land of peace beyond all earthly interference! That it will be peace for me hereafter, I know it well, and have now no fear of death:—but spare this infant from her cruel grandmother. Protect her from the vindictive malice of that lady, as well as this poor girl, who has followed the adverse fortunes of her mistress.—And now, Sir, to you I particularly address myself,’ added the beauteous sufferer, fixing her dove-like eyes full on the agitated countenance of Captain Singleton; ‘your conduct, when I threw myself on your protection, was that of a gentleman and a man of humanity toward the misfortunes of a helpless woman! to you, in my dying moments, I would speak a few words in private; dismiss all others from the chamber, save only the attendant, and my child, whom I would now gaze upon to the last moment of my fleeting existence. You must hear a dying mother’s request, and as you value the repose of a departing spirit, you must faithfully attend to it.’

“ ‘As I hope for mercy both here and hereafter, dear, much-wronged, beauteous lady,’ cried Captain Singleton, almost convulsed with emotions which he felt it impossible to resist, ‘I will promise to fulfil most sacredly all your injunctions. Name them, and I solemnly pledge my honour, nay my life, to the strict performance of them, even to the latest hour of my existence! We are now alone, dearest lady; there are none present but Jacqueline and your infant: and if of your child you would speak, name now your requests, which, by all my hopes of happiness in another and a better world, I will solemnly, nay most cheerfully comply with.’

“The lovely Duchess bowed her head in deep and affecting silence; and her attendant having administered some cordial to her by the express order of the physician, who waited in the adjoining chamber, she in a few minutes seemed considerably roused by its effects, though it was too visibly apparent, from her flushed cheek and the brightness of her eyes, that an access of fever was rapidly coming on, if it had not already taken place. Neither was her

speech so firm or collected as at the beginning of her address to Captain Singleton; in short, it was very easy to perceive, that the awful moment was not far distant when all her sufferings in this mortal existence would be finally at an end.

"Supported by pillows, with her hand still clasped in that of Captain Singleton, she, although more faintly, continued to implore him in the most affecting language to take charge of her child, and her attendant, into whose arms she had consigned it with a dying mother's last kiss, which not without difficulty she had imprinted on its unconscious rosy little lips.

" 'There,' uttered she, her angelic countenance being suddenly illumed with a heavenly smile, 'go my innocent, and may all thy mother's wrongs, if thou art destined to survive me, in thee one day have sure redress. Sir, to your care I bequeath my infant, and with her all that I now die possessed of. I have some rich clothes, and some valuable jewels, the gifts of my dear lord: reserve them for my poor deserted Agatha, and should you ever see her father, tell him how I died, and *where!* and oh, deceive him not—tell him, be sure to tell my Orlando who was the *cause* of our eternal separation in this world—though she cannot part us in another!'

" 'I have little more to say, and it is well, for I feel that I have but little time to spare.—I am growing faint, and my head is giddy:—be a father to my child in all respects, nor reveal aught to her of her sad, sad history, or her mother's fate, till she is old enough to bear it. Let her take your name, whatever it is, and oh, keep her profoundly ignorant of the pride of exalted birth or riches! bring her up in humbleness and virtue, and when you bequeath to her a mother's parting legacy, the jewels that I speak of, let her not know that they once adorned the bosom of her parent; tell her if poverty should ever be her lot, to convert these empty baubles to her use, but not to swell her pride. Breathe not the name of her unfortunate mother, or tell her of her fate, till, restored to the rights of her high birth, she shall enjoy its privileges without reproach or stain on the memory of her mother, and which then no one shall unjustly deprive her of. When Agatha shall be claimed and acknowledged as the heiress of Braganza,

then, and not till then, let her be informed to whom she owes her birth, and that you received the last request of her dying mother.—So shall heaven reward and bless you, both here and hereafter, for the kind compassion you have bestowed on an unhappy sufferer.’

“ ‘Should the Duke claim his daughter, must I not perforce deliver her up?’ uttered the captain.

“ ‘No, no!’ wildly exclaimed she ‘conceal my child, hide her, save her from the *sight* of that base woman her cruel grandmother. She has destroyed me, and will seek to destroy my child.—Look, she is here! she bears a dagger in her hand, and is going to plunge it in my bosom! hide me, save me and my little helpless innocent from that base wretch!—Jacquelina, don’t you see the Duchess coming toward us? here, here, give me my babe, and I will cover her up with the bedclothes!—The child, Jacquelina, the child! see, see, she is going to stab it.—Orlando, lord, Braganza, be quick, save, save your daughter! Orlando, I say, why come you not at the call of your dying Agatha? will you let your mother kill our pretty babe?’—

“ ‘Alas lady, I falter in relating to you the grief, the horror, of this heart-rending moment! for never after that had your mother one beam of returning recollection; and she continued to rave without intermission, till, more faintly and faintly beating, the pulse of life throbbed no more!

“ ‘The physician administered to the latest moment of her existence all the relief that mortal aid could give: and surely, lady, if the anguished sigh and the fast-falling tear are marks of deep and sincere repentance, it was mine; for innumerable were the sighs that I heaved, and the tears that I shed over the untimely grave of the lovely, much-wronged Florentine! who had died not knowing that Paulo Michello was so near her at the time she breathed her last, or that I had ever been instrumental in assisting the designs of the infamous and cruel Dowager. Yes, lady, it is true that this horrible pang was spared me, and for which I had reason to be thankful, for I could never have borne the torments I should have felt at being reproached by this injured angel in her last dying moments; which had, without this additional pang,

given me the most bitter and insupportable agony : and almost abhorring myself for the active part I had taken in destroying the peace and endangering the existence of this lovely and unfortunate woman, I resolved to become truly penitent for all my former crimes ; and, placing myself wholly under the government of Captain Singleton, devote my life to the service of him and the dear offspring of the so deeply lamented and much abused Agatha, whose still lovely remains, after a decent time had elapsed, we interred in the old Abbey, beneath one of the cloisters, supposed to have been the sanctuary of the pious monk Father Marco.—It was reported that on this spot he gave those lectures which had converted so many of his followers to adopt his faith. A cypress tree marks the place, lady, and the name of Agatha is still legible among those sad emblems of frail mortality, which eighteen years and more have not served to deface ! much care and time was indeed bestowed by Captain Singleton to render that spot distinguishable from all others ; ‘ and poor Agatha ! ’ has often been murmured from his lips, when he contemplated the cypress that seemed to weep over the loved remains which lay mouldering beneath its silent melancholy shade.

“ What Captain Singleton said to my confederate on the death which had so suddenly taken place of our lovely captive, I know not ; but they were probably much affected when he urged it is as an imperative reason why I should be absent from the old Abbey, at this particular crisis, for a considerable length of time ; and deputed Manfrida and Hasrac to take the command of the men and charge of the Abbey, under his authority, it being his own exclusive property, till such time was expired that he should find it necessary again to return to it. To the same purport did he inform my mother and Marinetta, the latter of whom I proposed taking with me, as a companion for Jacquelina.

“ ‘ To the first part of the business, Paulo, I have no objection,’ uttered Captain Singleton ; ‘ she is your wife, is young and lovely ; and it would be dangerous and impolitic to leave her behind you :—but as a companion for the nurse of the little Agatha I must positively reject her services. Have you forgotten the serious charges and injunctions I have received with this precious child,

or the awful and impressive words of its dying mother?—and think you I will lose sight of Jacqueline, or permit her to mix in the society of men and woman in a gay and licentious world, to pervert the principles of the lovely innocent under her care, and give improper notions to the daughter of a martyred saint?—no, Paulo, such is not my intention. I must place Jacqueline in the Convent of the Holy Sisters as a boarder, and also the child, where proper care will be taken of her, and the strictest attention paid to her morals and education; and one being only in the world is fit for the preceptress of the daughter of Braganza.’

“ ‘The Lady Matilda St. Clare!’ uttered I.

“ ‘The same!’ answered Captain Singleton: ‘she alone is able to direct the infant mind of Agatha to that bias which her angel mother so anxiously wished in the system of education she had marked out for her daughter; and which, had she been living, she would very early have adopted. Alas! with regard to Matilda, I have but little hope that she will ever forego her intention of taking the veil for me; because she believed me to be guilty of follies and indiscretions which her pure and spotless heart has so revolted at, that long before my quarrel with Zadaskie she rejected my vows. But of this resolution my powerful and vindictive rival had little reason to boast, as she at the same instant as proudly rejected his; and in the presence of the Baron her father, forbade him from ever approaching her in the character to which he was desirous of making pretensions—an affianced husband!—and it was not long ere the Count, imagining that I had succeeded in gaining the affections of the Lady Matilda, sent me a challenge, which however unwillingly I was obliged to accept, or have been thought guilty of cowardice, and of the aspersions he had laid to my charge. When we met, he was too much infuriated with rage and jealousy, both of which are generally blind, to listen to the voice of reason and truth;—or our cause of quarrel had then happily been adjusted otherwise than by the desperate means which were resorted to. He has since been convinced of the error he laboured under, and of the injustice he did me, when assured from the lips of the Lady Matilda herself that I possessed no influence over her mind, though I had once indeed obtained some interest in her affections, but which were now settled firmly on the

principles of religious faith, which taught her to choose a life of celibacy in preference to any other ; and that her father, the Baron, having left her sole mistress of her actions, it was her intention shortly to retire to the Convent of the Holy Sisters, where she had received the first rudiments of her education, and instantly to take the veil.—These are my reasons, Paulo Michello, for wishing to set out as soon as possible for the coast of Denmark ;—hoping that I may yet be able to obtain an interview with the Lady Matilda, and implore her protection for the lovely innocent of the unfortunate Agatha, now in the most helpless state of infancy ; but this I cannot do without disclosing to her the whole history and misfortunes of the infant's mother, which in so pure and faultless a bosom will repose in honour and safety. Let us then hasten to prepare for our immediate departure. The men are already apprised of our intention, and are perfectly satisfied with the security I have given them for your returning to them at the old Abbey at an appointed season. Meanwhile, I shall endure no apprehensions respecting the conduct and management of Manfreda and Hasrae, whom I have placed over them. To such a set of men, life is doubly sweet, because they *fear death* as their bitterest enemy, and will take care to preserve their own secrets for the sake of their immediate preservation.'

"I could not but admit the justice of this remark : and, leaving every arrangement that was necessary in my affairs wholly to the discretion and superior judgment of my now more than ever respected and valuable friend, bade Marinetta once more to prepare for a voyage over the high seas ; at which she seemed disagreeably surprised, being still in fear of the relative whom she had abandoned, and might probably again encounter when she returned to her own country.

" ' Well, and in the supposition that you do,' uttered I, ' what have you to fear from his displeasure ? are you not my wife by every just and sacred law, and think you that he will ever have the power, or even inclination, to effect a separation between us ? are you not far better provided for, and better taken care of, than you would have been had you remained beneath his roof, where he treated you with such severity ?—But if you are so afraid of

meeting your uncle, Marinetta,' continued I, 'you have still an alternative by which you may avoid it, and set your heart at rest.'

" 'And what is that, I pray you, husband?' inquired she.

" 'Remain at the Abbey till I again return to it. My mother will be glad of so sprightly a companion, to cheer the lonely hours which she will pass in my absence. Yes, Marinetta, I plainly see that you had much rather I should go without you.'

" 'Then you plainly see wrong,' cried Marinetta, with a rosy blush mounting into her fair and innocent face, and a tear half trembling in her dark eye:—'if you don't see that it would be worse than death to remain here without you you can see nothing at all, and so there is an end to the business!'

" And away she tript, and left me at liberty to make what comment I pleased with respect to the sincerity of her affection for me, of which indeed I had no reason to doubt, and therefore gave myself very little trouble about the matter.

" So Marinetta of course went with me; and having left my mother in full possession of all she required, which was namely plenty of the good things of this life, she expressed very little regret at again bidding me farewell: and was, I perceived, glad enough to be rid of my young and sprightly wife, towards whom she had always a most invincible dislike, though she never dared to show it in my presence.

" Well, lady, behold us once more safely landed on the coast of Denmark, where, on the moment of our arrival, we did as we had done before,—made choice of a most retired and sequestered habitation, far remote from the noisy bustle and business of the town, and where Captain Singleton, taking the whole establishment and expense of the house on himself, presided as the head of the family, making Marinetta act in the capacity of his house-keeper, and me—as I had sworn to be by an oath from which I had neither the power nor the inclination of retracting—his attendant, constantly about his person:—but I never sat down to meals with him, or entered into familiar conversation, except he made the advances for so doing, and which was seldom the case: for, I know not how it was, but after the melancholy death of the lovely Florentine, and the circumstances which had attended it,

the captain regarded me with impressions of a far less friendly nature than before, and at which, though I murmured not, my pride received a severe reproach. He also sunk into abstracted fits of melancholy and dejection, from which nothing seemed to have the power of arousing him; and which I attributed to his hopeless and unconquerable attachment to the Lady Matilda St. Clare, from whom he was now for ever severed in this world's earthly space, for that lady had taken her holy vows a few days after our arrival in Denmark, and they were irrevocable. Previous to which, however, and at the intercession of the then reigning Abbess of the Convent of the Holy Sisters, she admitted Captain Singleton to her presence, on the only plea he could have urged to have obtained any conversation with the so strictly pious lady, and that was, to implore protection for the helpless innocent he was so sacredly charged with the care of, within the walls of this holy sanctuary. This was at first refused by the holy sisters; but the sight of the lovely infant, it was said, wrought a powerful influence on the feelings of the Lady Matilda, to whom its mother's misfortunes and death were affectingly related by Captain Singleton, and she consented to receive the little Agatha, and to superintend her education, till the period at which the captain imagined he should be at full liberty to disclose her birth in order that she might be acknowledged for the daughter of Braganza, and claimed by the Duke her father: till when, in conformity to the sacred promises given her dying mother, Captain Singleton resolved to keep her exalted birth and the circumstances which had subsequently attended it a profound secret;—lest the machinations of the cruel and perfidious Dowager Duchess might again crush the blossom as she had destroyed the stem of this lovely tree: and as none but the Lady Matilda and the Abbess knew the history of your mother's misfortunes, or your exalted birth, lady, it was no wonder that you were received within the walls of this Convent as a mysterious little foundling, or that Lady Matilda's passionate fondness for you, which the captain has often told me that he beheld with rapture, should have awakened the jealousy and roused the suspicions of some of the holy sisterhood towards you. They insinuated, indeed, no very honourable reflections on the character

of one, who, though acknowledged as a saint, they still had the conscience to believe guilty of the grossest frailty.—In short, Lady Matilda was long suspected to be the *mother* of the little foundling that somebody had brought there, but they did not know who : to which the repeated visits of the captain, who frequently went to see you in the progress of your education, gave a stronger colour : but what cannot wealth accomplish, since it is certain that it can silence envy, and extort praise however unmerited, alike from the tongues of the illiterate and the more wise and cunning ones. Thus at the death of the Abbess, the unknown riches of the wealthy Matilda St. Clare, added to her acknowledged piety, became the instrument which enabled that lady to fill the vacant place : and when this event occurred, none of the holy sisterhood ever again made themselves busy about the history of the little Agatha, or as to what relation this Captain Singleton, who so frequently visited the Convent, stood in to the child.—It was the pleasure of the Abbess Matilda to espouse her cause, and that was sufficient !—Ah Lady ! as you gradually approached towards maturity,—when from the bud of tender infancy you expanded to the opening blossom of womanhood, and both in mind and person gave a lively promise that the wishes of your angelic mother would not be frustrated, nor the hopes of your foster-father disappointed ;—with what rapture have I beheld him returning from a visit to the Convent of the Holy Sisters, dwelling on the accounts given him by the Lady Matilda of your daily improvement ; and with what unspeakable satisfaction have I then beheld him stealing a glance at my Marinetta, after she had become the mother of my little Beda, telling her that her fortunes would one day be exalted by this dear and lovely child, meaning you, lady.

“ In short, we should have been content to have passed our whole lives in the calm and peaceful retreat which Captain Singleton had chosen for us, had not some unexpected reports reached our ears of the Braganza family ; implying no less than that the infamous Dowager was coming to reside on an estate which she had lately purchased in one of her continental excursions, in which she had been led to travel through part of Denmark : that the Duke Orlando, distracted since the supposed death of his lovely young

wife and infant daughter, had, after many months of a severe deprivation of all human faculties, suddenly recovered the use of reason, only to shut himself out from all social intercourse with mankind, and had become a voluntary exile and a gloomy misanthrope, the presence even of his mother not having the power of enlivening him or drawing him from the solitary and sequestered spot he had chosen for his retreat, which was somewhere upon the borders of Switzerland.

"The very mention of returning to his native land filled him, it was said, with the wildest terror and dismay, and the recollection that he once there enjoyed the possession of his beloved Agatha Delcrusa frequently caused a relapse of the mental malady which at times so severely afflicted him;—he had retired to this lonely and sequestered neighbourhood with one only attendant on his person, and would permit none other to approach him; which attendant was an old negro servant whom he had purchased of an African trader; this unsophisticated black had administered to him through all the stages of his long and dangerous indisposition, and now, used to the singular habits of his master, possessed more influence over his feelings than any mortal besides, and, in the wildest tumults of his disordered imagination, would suddenly appease him! and this faithful domestic the perfidious mother had endeavoured to corrupt, and wean from the service of his master, but in vain.

"Before he retired from Italy, however, she artfully contrived a meeting with her son, taking with her the little Montague Montault, whom she destined to be Braganza's heir; and the uncommon beauty of this child aroused for a moment the torpid faculties of her dejected son.—'You once promised to make Montague your heir,' exclaimed the artful Duchess, perceiving that at this moment the Duke was regarding the boy with peculiar earnestness not unmixed with affection: 'he is your brother's son, and of all his children he most resembles my dear Orlando!'

"'Of *all* his children!' cried the Duke, with an ironical smile, 'why how many children are you going to conjure up for him, mother?—he has but one other besides this pretty boy, and that, if I mistake not, is a daughter; and like her mother too!—' a

pause ensued, and, after a deep and almost convulsive sigh, he wildly resumed:—

“ ‘And had I not a daughter too? and oh, was *she* like her mother?—had she such deep blue eyes,—had she the rosy blush, had she the smile, the soft heavenly smile of my Agatha?—you can tell me, mother!’ ”

“ ‘Nay, my son, why do you dwell on the past with such painful recollection, alike distressing and unavailing?’ uttered the crafty Dowager, pushing the blooming youngster still nearer to his uncle. ‘You speak of objects that are now no more. The *living* claim your remembrance, not the *dead*, who cannot return your affection! this little one, who indeed might well pass for your own son, you have the power of making so, if you please.’ ”

“ ‘As how, mother?’ demanded the Duke, by no means insensible, however, to the caresses of the little smiling Montague, who had by this time climbed up to the Duke’s knees.

“ ‘Why, as you won’t marry again,’ uttered the Duchess—but had nearly repented of this unguarded expression, for the Duke, starting up and pushing the boy from him in a disordered manner, vehemently exclaimed,

“ ‘I marry again! what do you mean, Lady, by thus insulting the feelings of your miserable son?—have I not lost an angel, whose fellow the world could not match with all its charms! and think you that another shall ever supply the place of Agatha Delcrusa?—No, I *shall not* marry again! take my answer, and trouble me no more.’ ”

“ ‘As this was uttered in a sullen and angry tone, some finesse was thought proper to divert the subject of the Duke’s melancholy humour, which was effected by the Duchess turning round to little Montague, and telling him to show his uncle how he could do his exercise.

“ ‘Yes, I can march, handle arms, present, and fire,’ cried the boy, with great spirit, immediately displaying his ability with wonderful address; which, in addition to the warm plaudits bestowed on him by his grandmother, very soon restored the Duke to good humour, and increased the predilection he felt before in favour of his little nephew.

"In short, the artful and insidious Duchess so far interceded in favour of Montague Montault as to induce the Duke, before he yielded himself up to voluntary banishment in his solitary exile, to sign a paper, bequeathing the whole of his wealthy domains to his nephew in case of his sudden demise, by which he was eventually to succeed to the title and estates of the illustrious house of Braganza.

"No sooner had this vile woman accomplished her design than she departed from her unhappy son, so elated with her successful stratagem that she did not care what became of the unfortunate Duke, and whether he died in his exile or not was a matter of the most perfect indifference to her:—while she retained this document in her possession, she imagined that her grandson would always be secure of the title and estate; and, let the Duke banish himself or not, that Montague Montault would still become his heir. For many years, therefore, after her son had abandoned himself to exile, this vain-glorious and ambitious woman resided wholly on a magnificent estate in Italy, revelling in splendour, and passing her time in a round of the most luxurious pleasures and pursuits; forgetting, doubtless, that her unfortunate son Orlando was, or ever had been, in existence, or *that she herself* had rendered him so.

"These were reflections which, dreading the approach of, she sedulously tried by every means to avoid, plunging into perpetual dissipation, ill-befitting her advanced season of life; much less did she wish to reflect on the fate of Agatha, or of her infant granddaughter, both of whom she believed had been consigned to an early tomb in the mouldering ruins of the old Abbey, or buried beneath the bottomless depths of the sea. Paulo Michello, too, she hoped was exterminated from the race of mortal beings; or, if living, he knew better than to divulge her secret; it must die with him, or he must die by that! This, however, was a fearful and terrible thought to the wicked Duchess, for in the latter case she would be punished too, although not by Orlando. The Duchess, it appeared, had of late years some of these disturbed and restless phantoms floating across her imagination, and was at those times observed by the Marquis and Marchioness of Montault, as well as

by their son and daughter, to suffer great internal agitation, which was one day more apparent than at any other time ;—when Montague, happening to be intently gazing at the face of a beautiful portrait of a female which hung up in the picture-gallery, where they were walking, suddenly exclaimed,—

“ ‘ There, my Lord, that is the portrait I have heard say my uncle, the Duke Orlando, used to admire so prodigiously ; he said it resembled his wife.’ ”

“ ‘ Yes,’ answered the Marquis, ‘ he did so, and I have seen him gaze on it till he has rushed out of the gallery in a fit of absolute distraction.’ ”

“ ‘ Poor uncle ! what a misfortune it was that she died so soon,’ rejoined Montague, ‘ so beautiful too !’ ”

“ ‘ Beauty is not exempt from the grave, my dear boy,’ cried the Marquis, and at this moment the Duchess approached.

“ ‘ What are you looking at so intently, Montague ?’ inquired she.

“ ‘ Oh, I am so glad that your Grace is come to resolve me one question,’ said he, instantly leading her in front of the picture, and exclaiming, as he pointed it out to her observation, there now, is that portrait any thing like the young lady that my uncle the Duke was married to, and was so passionately fond of ?—she was very beautiful, was not she, your Grace ?—why don’t you answer me ? you are looking at the picture as if you were speechless : you are pale too, and are trembling so that you can scarcely stand ; good Heavens, what is the matter with your Grace ?’ ”

“ ‘ Give me some water or I shall faint,’ murmured out the Duchess, ‘ I am suffocated with the insupportable heat of these rooms : they always have this effect whenever I enter them !’ ” and, sinking into a chair, the Duchess gave way to a violent hysterical affection ; nor after this circumstance could she ever be made to enter the gallery of pictures again :—and, although Montague Montault thought this incident a little extraordinary in his grandmother, he was expressly forbidden by the Marquis and Marchioness ever to recal it to her memory again. What they thought of it was only known to themselves, as it afterwards induced them to be very cautious, when Montague was present, how they talked

of his absent uncle, for whose misfortunes this amiable young man seemed strongly interested, and whose fate he sincerely sympathized in and commiserated.

"No sooner, however, did Captain Singleton possess (from sure information) these particulars respecting the Braganza family, than he instantly resolved to remove you, lady, from the Convent of the Holy Sisters, and to quit Denmark as soon as possible.

"And whither will you now go, Sir?" asked I, the old Abbey will surely be no proper residence for the beauteous daughter of Braganza, now advancing into womanhood, and fit to adorn the society which so well becomes her exalted birth."

"Of which she is not likely to enjoy the privileges till that demon of infernal mischief is no more!" cried the Captain; "but it is not to the old Abbey that I intend to take my lovely foster-child, and yet I have potent reasons for not being far distant from that place. There is a period approaching, Paulo Michello, when the injuries of a much-wronged, innocent angel will call aloud for vengeance on the heads and hearts of those who cropt the sweetness of her early bloom; already does the messenger of Heaven await the awful sentence which will be inflicted on them for their remorseless cruelty to the unfortunate and martyred Agatha: whose lovely offspring shall flourish in happiness and honour when they shall be no more! I am going to the Convent of the Holy Sisters, there to commune with the Lady Matilda on the sudden intelligence I have gained; after which I shall shelter my nestling where Providence ordains!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"A skipping, dancing, worthless tribe ye are,
Fit only for yourselves; you herd together;
And when the circling glass has warm'd
Your vain hearts,
You *talk* of beauties that you never saw,
And fancy raptures that you never knew!"

THE agitation of our lovely heroine, during almost the whole of the affecting recital given her by Paulo of the misfortunes of the dear unhappy authors of her being, had produced an involuntary paleness of complexion, and a universal tremour on her nerves; insomuch that, alarmed at the change he beheld in her beautiful features, Michello implored her to take some refreshment to revive her now completely harassed and distressed feelings, ere he finished the painful task he had so unwillingly imposed on himself, but which a conscientious sense of duty nevertheless obliged him to perform: while Agatha, perfectly exhausted by the pangs which had been inflicted on her feeling and sensitive heart by the recital of her mother's wrongs and sufferings, very gladly accepted the glass of wine and biscuit Paulo now offered to her, who, greatly participating in the nature of her present sensations, begged that she would endeavour to compose herself, and to consider that the bitterness of those heavy and afflicting trials was now passed and gone for ever! that the celestial spirit of her departed mother now rested in peace from all those sufferings which cruelty and injustice had occasioned her to experience;—and that a period was not far hence, when brighter and happier prospects than she had ever yet known awaited her.

"What, when my dear unhappy father still remains in solitary exile," cried Agatha, at this moment dissolving into tears, "do you promise prospects of felicity to his child?—his unacknowledged, unknown child, whom he believes buried in one grave with her unfortunate mother? can Agatha taste of peace, or ever know a gleam of happiness, while her father is sorrowing in a far distant land, unconscious that his offspring is still in being, and

mourning over his fate?—no, Paulo! happiness is not for me till I behold my father!”

“Which day is not far distant let us hope, dearest lady,” replied Paulo; “Captain Singleton is now gone to ascertain an event, which, were we once certain of, you will not only behold your father, but speedily be restored to those rights of which you have so long been unjustly deprived;—namely, the death of the Duchess of Braganza, which only two days since was hourly expected at the Cottage on the Cliff. May Heaven be propitious to our prayers, and grant that her proud, rebellious, wicked spirit may now have terminated its earthly race, which she has rendered odious to humanity.”

“At the Cottage on the Cliff!” exclaimed Agatha, in the utmost astonishment; “Heavenly Powers! and is the Duchess of Braganza at the Cottage on the Cliff?”

“It is even so, dear lady,” uttered Paulo, “your perfidious grandmother is *your tenant* at the Cottage on the Cliff!”

“Yes, yes, I see it clearly now!” cried the agitated Agatha, “and it was by her treacherous arts that I have been betrayed, and forced from the bosom of my protector, was it not, Paulo? was it not by the contrivance of the Duchess that I have been brought hither?”

“To deny such truths, lady, as are incontestible, would be folly, and it is not my intention,” cried Paulo: “for no sooner had we quitted Denmark, and arrived once more in the land of Great Britain, than your foster-father, Captain Singleton, anxious to conceal, in order to secure the safety of, the sacred deposit which had been placed in his hands, endeavoured to procure a habitation secluded and remote from all other earthly beings; and you became an inmate of a private lodging which he had provided for you two months before you retired with him to the Cottage on the Cliff, which it seems he had made choice of in preference to any other residence about the coast, and had much difficulty in purchasing from Peter Blust, merely because that honest and benevolent man had too much principle to receive money for a habitation which at the time that Captain Singleton inspected it was intrinsically not worth a farthing; but the Captain, charmed with

the delightfully romantic beauty of the prospects which surrounded it, persisted in making it habitable for his future residence, by taking it entirely out of the fisher's hands, and bestowing such repairs on it as were found immediately necessary for the reception of a tenant; and after unwearied pains and considerable expense, the Cottage on the Cliff was at length rendered habitable, and convenient for the uses of a small family; and you and your foster-father, with your attendant Claribelle, and myself, became the inmates of it even before the workmen who were employed on it had completely finished their duty.—During the time, however, that the repairs were going forward, the Captain permitted me to take up my abode at the old Abbey, to which I had carried Marinetta and my infant daughter on the moment of my quitting the ship which had conveyed us from Denmark:—but you, lady, till now were never suffered to enter its walls! and it is remarkable that Captain Singleton would never permit Marinetta or her child to come into your presence, for which reason he procured a stranger to wait on you in the person of your woman Claribelle, whom I have every reason to suppose was highly recommended to his notice by the Lady Matilda St. Clare;—for Claribelle lived in the Convent of the Holy Sisters, as one of the domestics, though she had nothing to do with the holy orders of the profession, and was certainly in all respects a very fit person to attend you. I have nothing to say against poor Claribelle, though probably she would never have arrived to her distinguished post, had not your former nurse, the faithful Jacqueline, died of a complaint which suddenly attacked her soon after she had entered the walls of that holy sanctuary, while you were yet unconscious of the loss of so faithfully an attached domestic.”

“And how highly should I have prized her as being also the favourite domestic of my poor mother,” cried Agatha, deeply sighing, “and yet why should I wish to recal her to this earthly vale of sorrow? Alas, how far, far preferable her state to any condition in which I could have placed her, and how enviable, compared to mine, the most wretched, the most miserable!”

“Say not so, dearest lady,” uttered Paulo, “for you are innocent, you are virtuous, you are good; and to the truly good and

innocent, misfortunes, though they seem heavy, will pass over lightly as the breeze which fans the leaves of summer roses !—But to proceed.—On my arrival at the old Abbey, I found my confederates in a state of tranquillity and subordination such as I could little have expected from the irregular mode of life they had formerly led : and I commended most highly the management of Manfrida and Hasrac during the term of my long absence, rewarding them liberally for their pains.—In short, I had nobody to find fault with but my mother ; who, though aged and decrepid, constantly indulged in the habit of drinking to such an excess, that Hasrac assured me he had often discovered her lying senseless on the floor : and even when perfectly free from those fits of inebriety, she would invite the men to nightly feasts and carousals in the old Abbey.—At one of these nightly revels, I learnt, she had caused one of the men to take her to Cronier to purchase some new apparel, which she pretended she wanted, and did not return from thence for three days.

“ Shocked as well as incensed at such imprudent and ridiculous conduct in so near a relative, and one of such advanced years, to whom I had entrusted the whole of my household concerns, which had probably suffered most materially from her carelessness and wilful neglect, I reproached her in terms of the utmost asperity, and assured her, that although she was my mother, if a speedy reformation did not shortly take place, I would send her back to Italy, and wholly withdraw the kindness and support she had hitherto so liberally received from my hands. Nay, I threatened to report her conduct to Captain Singleton, if she did not immediately abandon the disgraceful habits she had contracted during the time of my absence ; and this last threat prevailed ; for Mysis had always stood in awe of the captain, and was excessively afraid of doing any thing to incur his displeasure.

“ To inform Captain Singleton of my mother’s misconduct, lady, I had really no serious intention, or he would not have permitted her to have remained much longer an inhabitant of the old Abbey, after such gross and indecent irregularity of character, rendered still more inexcusable at her advanced season of life ; but when the first emotions of anger towards her had subsided, I looked upon

her infirmities with an eye of pity rather than condemnation, for I considered that she was still my mother, and, whatever her faults, it was the duty of a child to conceal them if possible, and not to scrutinize rigorously, much less to expose them to the knowledge of an ever misjudging and censorious world !

“ The indiscretions of Mysis were therefore unknown to the captain, with whom I now wholly resided at the Cottage on the Cliff, though I frequently made excursions to the old Abbey, to see how things were going on with the men, and in what manner Mysis conducted herself towards Marinetta and the little Beda : and it was during these occasional visits that I perceived an alteration considerably for the worse in the person of my wife. She was pale, languid, and spiritless, and in a short time fell a victim to a rapid consumption.” Paulo sighed heavily, and was many minutes before he again resumed the thread of his affecting narrative : during which pause Agatha exclaimed,—

“ But surely you employed every means that medical assistance could afford for the recovery of poor Marinetta—did not you, Paulo ?”

As this question was not asked by our lovely heroine without fixing on Paulo an inquiring and anxious eye, he evinced some embarrassment in making the following reply, which was by no means a conclusive evidence in the opinion of Agatha that he had strictly discharged a husband's duty to his suffering wife.

“ Why yes, Lady, when I thought she was really in danger I obtained the advice of a physician, and she had recourse to medicines, but all was ineffectual to remove the malady which had so deeply taken root in her constitution. I was inconsolable at her death, because my poor little Beda had lost the care of a mother, which I feared would be very ill supplied to her by mine ! who, never having any affection for Marinetta, would pay very little regard to her child.”

“ Then why had you not removed Beda from the severity of so unfeeling, nay, so unnatural, a relative ?” cried Agatha, feeling indignant at the neglect which Paulo had evinced for the fate of his sweet and affectionate child. “ And why had not your kindness, as being her father, supplied to her the tender mother she had so unfortunately lost ?”

To which Paulo, deeply colouring, replied,—

“ You wrong me, lady, in supposing that I have not endeavoured to do so ;—but for taking my daughter from the old Abbey I had not the power ; as I was well assured that Captain Singleton would not have received her at the Cottage on the Cliff ; and where else could I have removed her ?”

“ Pardon me, Paulo, for saying that you erred greatly in the knowledge of my dear reputed father's disposition,” cried Agatha, “ and that you seem to have had no inclination yourself to ask him such a favour, which he never would have denied ;—while I—Oh, how happy should I have been to have had the dear little girl for my companion !—But pray proceed ; I am anxious to learn by what means I was so suddenly deprived of my protector, and how the Duchess discovered his lonely retreat in the Cottage on the Cliff :—she was surely not in England when he first inhabited it ?”

“ No, Lady, but the Marquis and Marchioness of Montault had newly arrived at their magnificent seat, situated in the neighbourhood of Cromer, and the Duchess herself was shortly expected at her own family mansion, the Castle of Montault. Alarmed by this intelligence, I imparted it to Captain Singleton, who had once been seen at Adam's circulating library by Lord Montague Montault ; and this once was sufficient, it appears, to attract his Lordship's observations towards him, as well as the curious inquiries of the Montault family generally, as to what sort of personage he was ; at which I do not wonder, for you, lady, were the companion of your foster-father at this fatal visit to the library.”

“ Yes, I remember once, and only once, that I went thither with my dear friend,” cried Agatha, “ and he made a purchase of some books and other trifles of Mr. Adams, at his library, who indeed surveyed me with strong symptoms of curiosity ; but I saw not Lord Montague or any personage at all resembling him at that moment ; and shortly after we returned home.”

“ But not without your having left an impression on the heart of Lord Montague which it appears will not be easily effaced,” rejoined Paulo, smiling, while the features of our lovely heroine had assumed a tint of the liveliest red ;—“ for from that hour, lady, you became the object of Lord Montague's incessant pursuit,—you

did not see him, it is true, for he was probably concealed, but he beheld you ;—and when he went home he could talk of nothing, but the beautiful daughter of the recluse who lived in the Cottage on the Cliff, of whom Adams had given so extraordinary an account with regard to his singular habits, manners, and mode of purchasing from Peter Blust the old ruinous cot that had so long been untenanted by any mortal being. Not only Lord Montague, but the Marquis and Marchioness themselves, became interested in the reports given of this mysterious stranger, who had so suddenly settled on their coast ; nor was the Marchioness, who is a proud, vain, and ambitious woman, remarkably pleased with Montague's warm and flattering description of the beautiful daughter of this singular and romantic recluse. She had far other views for the wealthy heir of the fortunes of Braganza and Montault ; and it was probably some secret correspondence which she held with her mother-in-law, that was the cause of the Dowager so speedily returning to her native land :—for she did return even while Captain Singleton inhabited the Cottage on the Cliff!—his very name, when she heard it, inspired her with the most terrific fears that her secret had been discovered, which her grandson had greatly added to by lavishing the highest encomiums on the uncommon loveliness of the captain's young and charming daughter, whom he professed never to have beheld but once, and that once only in the presence of her father ; and although this ardent account was received by the Dowager at first with an air of the most perfect apathy, yet she retired under apprehensions truly alarming that this lovely girl, whom Montague had so warmly extolled, was no other than the daughter of the exiled and self banished Duke and the beautiful Florentine : and if so, where were the aspiring hopes she had formed for her darling grandson ?—for Agatha would be found the rightful heiress to all the fortunes of Braganza.

“ With so horrible a suggestion haunting her imagination, and the strong necessity also for concealing such a conjecture from the family of Montault, the Dowager wrought her mind to a perfect fever, and continued for many weeks at the castle seriously confined by indisposition. Her mind was alternately a prey to the

most gloomy and prophetic terrors ; she thought of her injured daughter-in-law, whose offspring, it was now probable, had not met the destruction she had designed for her : and though a period of nearly eighteen years had elapsed, the unfortunate and lovely Florentine herself might still be living.

“ What was to be done, in this momentous and critical state of her affairs, the perplexed and agitated Dowager knew not. Without betraying her secret to Captain Singleton, she could form no probable pretext for gaining a sight of his beautiful daughter, whom he kept secluded almost from all intercourse with her fellow-beings !

“ But think you, lady, that during this interval of the Dowager’s indisposition I was idle in conveying to the ear of your foster father all the intelligence I could gain of what was passing at Montault Castle ?—No ! I had obtained an influence over the affections of a female domestic in the Duchess’s establishment, who was in all the cabinet secrets of her lady ; and under pretence of conceiving a violent passion for her, and with a borrowed name and character, frequently had an opportunity of addressing her ; and she, unasked, gave me the full history of her infamous mistress.

“ Thus, hearing from Isabel that the Duchess was recovering, and shortly intended to pay a visit to the Cottage on the Cliff, I flew on my return to the chamber of Captain Singleton and apprised him of her design ; beseeching him, though at so late an hour, to pack up all the valuable chests which belonged to your mother, and repair with them to the old Abbey, ‘ in which case,’ cried I, ‘ this artful woman will be frustrated in her project of learning who Agatha actually is : and presuming her to be your daughter, will not dare to invade her repose, or to question her about the history of her birth. If you set out by break of the morning, and do not return hither, it will be imagined that you have perished in the ocean, and Agatha will mourn over the supposed death of her father ; but she will be benefitted rather than injured by your absence ; for, were you to remain here, exposed to the Duchess’s keen observation, the whole secret would be discovered before the

time is ripe for its disclosure, and I and all my confederates be exposed to the malice of the infuriate Duchess ; you yourself must give an account by what means the daughter of Braganza has been preserved and secreted to the present moment ; and my contract with the Duchess is not yet fulfilled—the period stipulated for concealment has not yet expired :—let but another year elapse, and all will be safe—all secure, and the daughter of the martyred Florentine be fully restored to her rights !’

“ ‘ On one condition only will I depart,’ said Captain Singleton ; ‘ that you do not leave Agatha till you see her safely bestowed under the protection of the Fisher, Peter Blust :—when my supposed death shall have reached the ear, and I much fear will pierce the heart, of that dear affectionate child, then let the fisher be brought into the presence of Agatha, and I am greatly mistaken if he does not offer her his protection the moment he is apprised that she has no longer a friend or a father.’ ”

CHAPTER XXXV.

" 'Tis bitterness enough to feel
 Our hopes and wishes vain,
 And in the aching heart conceal
 The dearly-cherished pain ;
 But worse it is to think, how blest
 Our *dreams* of life must be,
 Then feel the pang that wrings the breast,
 Which never may be free."

" 'THERE is no time to be lost, Sir,' uttered I, " all your valuable property, and that which you hold in trust for Agatha, must this night be removed to the old Abbey ;—or it will lead to disclosures which we are yet forbidden to make : but, for the safety of your foster-daughter, I swear, by the Father of all creation, to leave her under the protection only of the Fisher Blust ; and if he does not offer it to her in the supposition that by your death she has become a helpless orphan, I will then provide means for her escape from all the machinations of her cruel grandmother somewhere else : but after this I must instantly depart in the most secret manner from the Cottage on the Cliff ; and may very probably be accused of being a robber and a purloiner of your property and that of Miss Singleton ; but this reproach I cannot avoid, and I had better lay myself under such a stigma than hazard the fury of the enraged Duchess, and expose the safety of my life, and that of all my confederates, to her direst vengeance."

" ' Be quick, then, in your operations, and let me in silence depart before you leave me time for a moment's serious reflection,' uttered the Captain, with considerable emotion ; ' I have pledged my word to you for the preservation of your life, and I will never depart from it ; but the torments I feel in separating myself from that beloved child are uncontrollable, for it is Nature's eloquence that pleads in her behalf. Be quick then, and let me depart ere I behold her loved form again, which, I confess, would stagger my firmest resolutions. Men are generally poor philosophers, Paulo

Michello! it is a title of which many boast, but useless have been their efforts to maintain it.

" ' And at best what is it but an absolute perversion of Nature's sacred rights?—feeling and humanity were never yet centered in a breast from which the tenderest emotions are shut out; but a good man scorns to ape what he does not truly feel; and I am no philosopher, neither am I ambitious of being thought one when woman, helpless woman, calls for that protection which Nature and Heaven give her an exclusive right to, did she possess no other from the softness of her sex. Man was born to protect woman, and when he does not do so, he degenerates into the brute creation, and bears no longer the image of the all-perfect Being who has formed him,—let me no longer then behold the sweet face of Agatha, if you wish me to be steady to my purpose, but by break of day provide me with a boat to convey me to the Abbey! "

" I did so, lady, and you and your attendant Claribelle were locked in downy slumbers, when Captain Singleton, to whom I owed eternal gratitude for this last proof of the signal service he had rendered me, silently departed from his beloved Cottage on the Cliff; and ere he did so, how truly, how fervently did he pray for the safety and the peace of the angelic being whom he left behind him!

" ' Remember that the safety of Agatha alone demands this sacrifice,' uttered he, as he stepped into the boat.

" ' Behold that bright-shining firmament above us!' exclaimed I; ' by that, and by Him who made it, Paulo Michello will be true to his trust! "

" ' Farewell!' ejaculated the Captain,—' Till we meet again, may all good angels visit you with repose!' responded I: and the boat pushed off for her destined course.

" Lady, you are no stranger to the events which so rapidly succeeded to this momentous and awfully remembered night! for scarce two hours had elapsed after the departure of my valued friend, before that dreadful and tremendous fury of the elements began to appear, and to threaten us with one of the most violent hurricanes that the boldest and most experienced mariner ever yet

had witnessed on the coast of Cromer ! but I was well aware, lady, that Captain Singleton would reach the place of his destination long before he could feel much inconvenience from the coming storm. It was not for *him* that I endured any apprehension, but for *you*, lady, that I suffered the most agonizing sensations of grief, compunction, and remorse ! The state of distraction to which I beheld you reduced for the supposed loss of an affectionate relative so perishing, together with the dreadful fate of the unhappy sufferers who really perished in the tempest of this night, nearly deprived me of my faculties and of all power of exertion. It was an inauspicious omen, I imagined, of your future destiny in the fatal Cottage on the Cliff ! and never was I so rejoiced as when the benevolent fisher came to your relief, and offered you an asylum beneath his friendly roof ! which was the immediate signal for my retreat ; my presence could now do no good, but possibly much evil ; and though honest Peter would have received me into his mansion, as the confidential servant of my late master, I could not but perceive that in this act of humanity, he imposed great restraint on his feelings ; and that he did not entertain a very violent predilection in my favour :—for which I freely forgave him, as I own that I had adopted some of the singularities of Captain Singleton, namely, reserve and mystery ; and for which, heaven knows, I had far greater occasion than my excellent friend.'

" Well, lady, I very speedily made my exit after the departure of Captain Singleton, well knowing that as soon as you discovered the chests and library to be removed, I should be accused of having committed the robbery :—*and so I was*—but there was no alternative, and no means of vindicating myself from so foul a charge.

" I therefore repaired to the Abbey as soon as possible, and imparted to Captain Singleton the pleasing intelligence that you and Claribelle were safely bestowed beneath the roof of the Fisher Blust. He was by no means satisfied, however, with the reports I had given him, and in disguise often made excursions to Cromer to learn how you were situated at the house of the fisher, and whenever indisposed, he assigned to me this perilous underta-

king (for perilous it was in both our situations) to inspect all that was going on at Herring Dale. To have appeared in my own character would have been little short of madness; hence I suggested the thought of putting on the attire of an old female gypsy, and in this character I had frequent opportunities not only of beholding you, Lady, but of knowing what passed in the Castle of Montault, for I often went thither to *tell fortunes*, and to sell posies of the wild-flowers which I culled on the seashore. I also encountered my old female acquaintance, the pretty Isabel, who without knowing what particular design I had in asking her questions, very freely imparted the whole budget of the family concerns, and so long as I predicted the speedy return of her faithless lover, who had so suddenly absconded, she refused me nothing that I was inclined to ask. One evening she informed me that the Duchess was going to reside at the Cottage on the Cliff: that she had rented it of the young lady who had lost her father, and that she believed, from some hints thrown out, that no good was intended to Miss Singleton by this sudden arrangement,—for that the Duchess had vowed vengeance against the beautiful orphan, because her grandson, Lord Montague Montault, had fallen desperately in love with her—and that the Marquis and Marchioness were in the utmost state of alarm about it, fearful that some clandestine proceeding might take place between the young couple.

“ ‘ Lord Montague Montault !’ uttered I, my voice smothered to the old gipsy accent—‘ and he is destined to wear that sweet flower, Isabel,’ pronounced I, crossing my hand in a most mysterious manner; ‘ yes, in spite of envious fate, Montague Montault will one day be the husband of that pretty lady.’

Our lovely heroine blushed deeply at this remark, and betrayed the utmost embarrassment, which Paulo not appearing to notice, pursued his story.

“ ‘ But how can you predict that, mother ?’ said Isabel, laughing, ‘ seeing that Lord Montague is so rich and grand, and the son of a marquis, while Miss Singleton is only——’

“ ‘ His superior both in rank and fortune,’ cried I; ‘ it will turn out so, you may depend, my pretty Isabel, on a day and in an hour

when they least expect it. I see it in the moon and in the stars. I hear it in the wild waves, and the winds echo back the sound. Angels have whispered it above in the sweet heavens, and who shall dare to disbelieve them ?

" Suffice it to say, lady, that I also continued to whisper something in the ear of Isabel, which she was perfectly satisfied would one day come to pass ; so I departed, firmly resolved to acquaint Captain Singleton with what I had gleaned, and to gain more intelligence at some future opportunity : and it was to obtain more that I accosted you on the evening you were accompanying the Miss Blusts to the residence of Margaret Craftly. Do you remember the sprig of myrtle that I took from you in spite of your reluctance to part with it ? and do you remember the mysterious voice that addressed you under the window of your chamber ? It was mine, lady ! I wished to apprise you that some one unseen watched over your happiness and guarded your safety. I also wrote that letter thrown into the window."

" And did you also place that myrtle-tree beneath it ?" inquired our heroine, with some impatience ; " was *that* the gift of Paulo, or of——"

Agatha paused and coloured deeply, while Paulo replied,—

" No, lady ! another hand than mine placed the blooming myrtle there ; it was the gift of Lord Montague Montault. This too I learned from the ingenuous Isabel ; and not thinking it prudent of the young Lord to make so clandestine an avowal of his passion, I cautioned you, lady, against all invidious attacks made upon your youthful and unsuspecting heart."

" But you found it invulnerable to all such attacks, did not you, Paulo ?" cried Agatha, with much spirit ; " it is neither in the power of Lord Montague or any one else to alter its determination, when once it suspects mystery or insidious design. I hold no intercourse with any human being who does not approach me by open, fair, and honourable means."

" You are unquestionably right, lady," answered Paulo, " and though I pity the passion with which you have inspired the young Montault, I commend the prudence and the delicacy you have

shown in discouraging appearances of any clandestine nature : were all women to do this, men who use hypocrisy would be detected in their endeavour to delude the unwary sex, while women would cease to become the victims of their own credulity. But to proceed.—

“ Your grandmother had become your tenant, when I one morning encountered Isabel at the sea-side, who informed me that it was the intention of the Duchess to decoy you that very evening to the Cottage on the Cliff, under pretence of having something of serious import to communicate ; that a note was to be despatched to Herring Dale, she having learned that the fisher was that day absent from home, and that it was to contain an earnest request that you were to come to the Cottage alone ; that one of the servants was to take and deliver it into the hands of Miss Agatha Singleton.

“ ‘ But what she means to do with the poor girl, if she does come, Heaven only knows,’ continued Isabel, ‘ for never did I behold her in such a rage ; and it is all about Lord Montague, who has just quitted her so pale and melancholy, poor soul, it grieves me to look at him ; he used to be so sprightly and gay, but mercy on me, this foolish love bewitches us all, don’t it mother ?’

“ I nodded assent, but was too much agitated by Isabel’s intelligence to attend to any thing more she had to say ; it was your safety, lady, that engrossed every thought, and there was no time to be lost ; every moment was precious, for, if once conducted to the presence of your grandmother, I was well aware that she would employ every means to detain you in her power : nay, how could I tell that your very life would not be endangered by the arts of this base perfidious woman ?—bidding a hasty adieu therefore to Isabel, I flew to the coast, and jumped into a boat, which was always ready at hand, in case I required immediate flight, whenever I was in my usual prowls about the sea-coast. Rowing off with all imaginable speed, I arrived at the old Abbey, almost breathless with the tidings to Captain Singleton.

“ ‘ Agatha, my child, I shall then lose thee after all !’ exclaimed

he; 'my hasty zeal to serve a friend has endangered the safety of the only individual that binds me to existence.'

"'Oh, wrong me not thus! do me not such injustice!' answered I, more wounded by this reproach than any I had yet received; 'for what purpose am I come hither but to secure the safety of that lovely maiden? why have I flown to give you the earliest intelligence of her fate? and why do you behold me thus panting, nay almost breathless with impatience, to snatch her from the danger that is hanging over her? Bold is the design that I have formed for her rescue, and speedy must be its execution, in which the timidity of her maiden fears may suffer much; but she had better endure all these, than be utterly lost to us for ever. We must watch and surprise, nay we must boldly venture to seize her, as she is journeying towards the Cliff, convey her to our boat, and in a few hours bring her to your transported arms.'

"'Nay, this sudden meeting would be too violent for the feelings of the dear agitated girl to sustain,' uttered the captain, 'conduct her to the Abbey without delay, but my restoration to her must be disclosed with caution, and in moments more tranquil than the present ones. Fly then to save Agatha by the only expedient that is left in our power, and in seeming to use force, take care to preserve the utmost gentleness towards her: let not a sentence, let not a look, I charge you, wound the delicacy or the feelings of that most precious child.'

"'Have you still a doubt of my full obedience? answered I: 'though treacherous to all others, to you I have been ever faithful; and may I perish this moment if the safety of that child be not dearer to me than my own. I go, I fly to save the lovely Agatha.'

"The orders I gave, lady, were peremptorily and instinctively obeyed. In one moment the attack-boat, usually so called by our men from its amazing swiftness in sailing, was launched into the bosom of the ocean, and in the next I beheld Manfreda, our most skilful pilot, stationed at the helm of it. Dick Wildfire and another seaman had the management of the oars; and away they rowed with the utmost expedition towards the cliffs of Cromer.

Manfrida having received every necessary instruction, wanted no hint to perform his duty, for which he was always prepared : and after this I returned to tranquilize, if possible, the agitated feelings of my friend, and succeeded in seeing him more calm, when I assured him there was no possibility of our design failing ; ' for even in the supposition that Agatha has a companion in her journey to the Cliff,' cried I, their efforts will be unavailing against the force of the men, who are so accustomed to their daring profession, and the lovely maid herself being wholly unable to offer any effectual resistance.'

" ' But you may remember that her mother *did resist force* on a similar occasion,' rejoined the Captain ; " never shall I forget the courage and magnanimity she displayed ; and her daughter, believe me, has this same distinguishing feature in her disposition. I have frequently remarked, wondered at, and admired, the similitude of character between Agatha and her beauteous ill-fated mother.'

" ' May be so,' answered I, ' but in this case, the less she displays of it the better.'

" ' Heaven grant that the dear child may submit calmly !' murmured the captain.

" Lady, you well know that this pious wish of your foster-father *was* granted ! and that no force was used contrary to your gentle nature when you were conducted to these walls, nor to the youth who was the companion of your journey hither. At your request the boy was spared. Though his saucy interference sometimes provoked the severity of the men, yet for the wealth of worlds they should not have approached this lad with an injurious touch ; for we were familiar to each other, lady ! I have often held converse with him in my mysterious character, unseen by mortal eye on the rocks of Cromer.'

" So Wolf told me," cried Agatha, smiling, " and also of the prophetic forebodings you made respecting my fate, which inspired him with terror and me only with pity for your abject state, to which I thought nothing could have reduced you but the mere wanderings of a bewildered imagination. I took you for a ma-

niac, and laughed at Wolf for his silly fears! But how like you *this* youth? tell me truly, Paulo."

To which Paulo replied,—

"He is an eaglet of some valiant nest, I will pledge my life on it. I have marked the boy with curious attention as he fearlessly leaped over the craggy rocks with the alacrity of the bounding hind! His undaunted spirit too shines through every intelligent feature, and his whole character seems prompt to energy and action, which constitute the soul of enterprise lady."

"Oh, would that Wolf were indeed my brother, for how dearly do I love the youth!" exclaimed Agatha; "or that I could once learn the history of his birth, which, like my own, has remained in mystery. But may I not soon again hope to see my father Paulo? for still must I call him so; will not Captain Singleton again behold the fated child who has innocently drawn upon him so much trouble and perplexity?"

"Even to-night do I expect his return from the cliffs of Cromer, lady," replied Paulo; "trust me, he is very anxious to see you, but yet more anxious to learn the fate of the Duchess. If she be still living, it will but for a few months delay the disclosure of your birth; and if *dead*, you will instantly be restored to that exalted station of which you have so long been unjustly deprived. The self-banished, absent Duke will then be speedily recalled,—and ah! whom to behold? his own beloved and honoured offspring, the lovely and virtuous daughter of his angel-bride. And, seeing you, will he not believe? for you, lady, are his most perfect resemblance! save your feminine loveliness, you are the *very image* of your noble father!"

"It may be so, since I do not at all resemble my mother," cried Agatha; "but cannot you tell me, Paulo, aught that has passed in the house of my benevolent protector, the Fisher Blust, since the hour that I was doomed to quit it? have you no knowledge of what that friendly, honest man endured when I so suddenly disappeared? nor of the sensations of the sweet Jessy, or of my poor Claribelle, when she discovered the loss of her mistress?"

"No, lady, I can tell you nothing of all this," replied Paulo,

"here I am left in darkness. You will shed a light on this darkness when you shall again appear among them. I had no access to the house of the Fisher Blust, nor dared, even in my mysterious disguise, once approach, for fear that my reception might not have been of the pleasantest kind. In the first place, I dreaded the unsophisticated bluntness of the honest Peter, and I was well aware that Claribelle was no stranger to my having more than once approached you in this mysterious disguise. I once visited the dwelling of Shelly, it is certain, with a view of gaining some intelligence of the fisher's family, but he eyed me with an air of suspicion and jealousy; although I had indeed previously learned from the old dame that the grief and consternation occasioned in the house of your protector by your loss had reduced it to a mansion of despair; that the sum of five hundred pounds had been offered by Mr. Blust as a reward to any person who could give him any clue to the outrage that had been committed, or discover the place of your retreat:—but your presence, lady, like the radiant sun, will dispel all gloom on the honest brow of the poor fisher, when you shall again appear at Herring Dale, the acknowledged daughter and heiress of the Duke of Braganza!"

"At the former title how anxiously does my bosom beat!" cried Agatha, "for what child would not wish to be acknowledged by a father? but for the latter I have no vain ambition—except to exalt those to whom I owe eternal gratitude and thanks. Among that number, Paulo Michello, your name will not be forgotten: for to you alone am I indebted for deliverance from the snares of my cruel grandmother. Yes, it was necessary that my friends should sustain this heavy trial of their feelings by my supposed loss, and that I myself should suffer *present* to avoid *future* evils. Alas, how unjustly do we accuse Providence for its dispensations toward us, when even misfortunes and calamities, (seemingly so) are but blessings in disguise:—and how wisely is the book closed that would otherwise reveal this knowledge to our view!"

"And were it open, might mortal eye behold it, Lady—alas, could we read with judgment and understanding what it unfolds?" cried Paulo; "it is withdrawn for purposes wise and sacred—unsearchable, but always just!"

As night had imperceptibly advanced during this long conference, and Beda had more than once appeared, to remind her mistress of the lateness of the hour, Paulo respectfully retired, and left Agatha to enjoy a repose more sweet and tranquil than she had ever yet known! in which, if the image of Lord Montague Montault once intruded, to what are we to attach blame?—certainly not to the pure and faultless bosom of our lovely heroine, for she was innocent as far as innocence can extend to mortal frailty!

Well then, who *was* in fault?—perhaps Paulo—but more likely Nature herself, who first implanted this sweetest of all human sensations in the breast, and without which existence would be deprived of the charm which binds us to it!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

‘—And here was youth and here was beauty
Nipt like an April flower, that
Opens its leaves to the sunshine,
While the breath of the east prevails.”

WHILE balmy slumber seals the eyes, and the guardian angel that presides over truth and innocence visits the repose of our beauteous heroine, while all is hushed to silence in the mouldering ruins of the old Abbey, save ‘the moping owl, that doth to the moon complain,’ we will endeavour to wing our flight somewhat beyond the precincts of this gloomy pile, and, skimming like the fairy elves that sport upon the glassy stream by Luna’s silver ray, launch our adventurous bark again upon the bosom of the ocean, that sweeps, in its course, towards the cliffs of Cromer; where in due season we shall enter the habitation of Peter Blust, and inquire what has been passing at Herring Dale since the so deeply-regretted and deplored loss of Agatha Singleton.

Why, gentle readers, I dare say that you are as anxious as I am to come to the elucidation of a tale which has so long remained wrapt up in profound mystery,—and thus, therefore, commanded by the Fates, I unfold it.—

On the evening that Agatha quitted the house of her protector, the benevolent, honest fisher, accompanied by her dear Wolf, she left both Jessy and Olive Blust in the supposition (for who could doubt it) that she was going to visit her illustrious tenant at the Cottage on the Cliff, by whose artful and insidiously contrived note she was led to imagine that matters of serious communication awaited her arrival there.

How Agatha bore the disappointment of her cherished hopes that such might be the case, and how she was disposed of on that eventful evening, you well know: and being marvellously fond of preserving one at least of King Charles’ golden rules, namely, of not repeating old grievances—I am not going to tell you of what

you have heard before, but beg you to picture to yourself the thousand restless thoughts, tender fears, and dreadful apprehensions, which filled the bosom of the affectionate Jessie, when the passing hours stole on to an unusual length, and neither Agatha or the fisher had yet returned.

Jessy and Olive had seated themselves at a little table after the departure of Agatha; Jessy took up her work, Olive took up her lap-dog (little Silvia,) and Alfred took up a book; and the first that broke silence was the impatient Olive, who, tired of caressing even what she most loved, exclaimed in a pettish tone:—

"Jessy, why don't you say something? I protest this is worse than being at a quaker's meeting, for there *the spirit* moves somebody to speak at last: but here we are all mumchance only because Miss Singleton happens to be gone out, as if nobody was worth the talking to but her."

"I was thinking of Miss Singleton at that moment, Olive," cried Jessy, throwing down her work.

"And so I was too, Miss Jessy," said Alfred, flinging down his book.

"And it appears that you have been both studying her airs and her graces:" retorted Olive.

"Would to Heaven that I could acquire half the graces of Agatha Singleton," said Jessy, "the study would be well worth my pains."

"'Grace is in all her steps, Heaven in her eye!' I have marked that page down in the book that I have just been reading," exclaimed Alfred, and smiled.

"'Grace is in a fiddlestick's end,' as father says," replied Olive, with an envious and malignant sneer; "but to be sure every body must be thinking of Miss Singleton, I suppose, and nobody is to think of any one else without being called to account about it; for my part, I am sick of her very name, for one can hear nothing else but *Miss Singleton* all over the house!—There's father, the first word he says when he comes down stairs of a morning is—'where's Agatha Singleton?' and there's Jessy, as soon as the tea is popt into the pot, 'dear me, where is Miss Sin-

gleton?" then there is that prating Wolf, bawling out for her at one door, and Alfred at another, till one is perfectly dinned with their noise,—not to say that David and Alice are keeping up the same game in the kitchen, all about *Miss Singleton*."

To these observations, so unkind, and illiberal, Jessy only replied:—

"One cannot be too anxious about an object that one loves."

"And who is so worthy of being beloved?" pursued Alfred.

Olive was just about to vent some more of her splenetic humour, had not the entrance of Claribelle with the supper-tray put a restraint on her petulance, which at the same time was by no means diminished by Claribelle expressing her anxiety that her young mistress was not yet returned.

"I assure you, Miss Jessy, that I am quite uneasy about my dear young lady," said she, "and so is Alice, who could not abide the thoughts of her going to that frightful cliff, where so much mischief has happened already; and I begin to quake, every limb of me, for the hour is growing very late, and my dear Miss Agatha was never fond of late hours. I protest I am quite unhappy at her staying out so long."

"And so am I, I can assure you, Claribelle," answered Jessy.

"I am exceedingly uneasy, also," said Alfred; "yet Wolf is with my dear sister, and Wolf would not let any one harm her, he would perish first."

"Why to be sure, master Alfred, that is what Alice says," rejoined Claribelle; and, looking, at Olive, who had bit her lips with vexation at so much anxiety being expressed about an object whom she hated, added—"and you, Miss Olive, don't seem quite comfortable any more than the rest of us. I dare say you are fearful that some accident has befallen my dear young lady."

"Indeed I am thinking of no such thing, mistress Claribelle, answered Olive, disdainfully—"I was not thinking about your young lady at all. I have got 'other fish to fry,' as the saying is. There is somebody to be thought of besides Miss Singleton."

"Why to be sure Mr. Blust is not yet come home, either,"

cried Claribelle, "and it is certainly your duty, Miss Olive, to think of your father."

"But my sister Jessy don't seem to trouble her head much about father," rejoined Olive, spitefully.

"Father is old enough to take care of himself," observed Jessy, "and is besides in the habit of staying out late when he goes on business to Cromer. But who knows what dangers may attend our dear young friend on that fearful cliff!"

A loud laugh from the unfeeling Olive shocked the ears of the tender-hearted Jessy, while it disgusted those of Alfred and Claribelle; the latter of whom, casting on Miss Blust a look perfectly expressive of her feelings, sighed mournfully, while she exclaimed,—

"Yet Heaven, Miss Jessy, will always protect its faithful votaries; and my dear Miss Agatha will never be deserted by it, because she has always merited its protection."

At this precise moment the loud whistle of Fisher Blust proclaimed his arrival at the gateway, and David, his trusty squire, went forth to meet him.

"I would lay any wager that father is a little the worse for drinking," cried Olive, laughing, "and if so I will coax him to give me a new silk scarf, just like Miss Singleton's. I love to see father when he has got a drop too much—he is always so funny and good-natured.

"But I do not think that you will this time, Olive, succeed in your wishes," cried Jessy, "he will be too anxious about the fate of our dear Agatha Singleton to attend to objects of so trifling a nature."

The nose as well as the lip of the scornful Olive was, as might very naturally be supposed from this young lady's habitude of manners, turned up at this remark of her gentle sister: to which she would as insolently and haughtily have replied, had the Fisher Blust, who at that moment bounced into the room, permitted her the opportunity: but this, not being the case, Olive chose to be silent,—for two ostensible reasons—her dislike to speak of Agatha at all, and the fear of offending her father, whose spirits

were certainly a little exhilarated beyond their usual pitch by some copious libations he had been making to Bacchus. On his return home, having called in at the sign of the Trumpet, honest Sheltly set before his honoured master what Peter himself had but little inclination to resist, some excellent tobacco; to which he added a flask of deliciously flavoured brandy, which Sheltly had procured, nobody knew *how*, by the sea-coast, one stormy night that he had been called out with the pilots on public duty—perhaps it was smuggled, and perhaps it was not—we cannot clearly ascertain the fact: but honest Sheltly had *paid the coin for it*, and that was sufficient; and Peter relished it exceedingly. In short the fisher, we are obliged to state the truth, was but little short of inebriety when he arrived at Herring Dale; and not wishing to encounter any witness of it but David, to whom it was by no means a novel sight, was much surprised as well as displeased at finding that the family were still sitting up for him, and on his entrance to the little oak-parlour inquired pettishly of Jessie and Olive why they had not long since retired to their chambers.

“Shiver my top-sails!” shouted he, squatting himself down in his great elbow-chair, and whisking off the four or five double silk-handkerchiefs which had been carefully folded round his neck by dame Sheltly, to prevent the effects of catching cold:—“what is the meaning of all this?” continued he, now preparing to take off his boots, which he persisted in doing himself without the assistance of his trusty squire, David, who stood in a corner of the room slyly grinning at the whimsicality of humour in his old master; “what have you all been sitting up to such an unaccountable late hour as this for, you silly wenches?—No, *not all!*” cried the fisher, now glancing his eyes (as well as he could see out of them) at the vacant seats which were usually occupied by Wolf and Agatha Singleton: “some of you have been wiser and gone to their roosts, before the cock crows to call them up again. Wolf is gone to bed, and so is Miss Singleton.”

A short interval of silence ensued, painful in the extreme to poor Jessie and the youth Alfred, but highly amusing to the unfeeling, cold-hearted Olive, whose inclination to laughter was

scarcely repressed by the pale and affrighted looks of her now alarmed and agitated sister; who, though dreading her father's present state of irritability, was nevertheless under the absolute necessity of informing him of the absence and departure of her lovely friend, and, trembling, exclaimed:—

“Dear father, I would to Heaven that Miss Singleton and Wolf were really retired to their chamber, and enjoying their usual repose beneath this roof, or that we could be assured of their being in perfect safety beneath any other; but, alas! I grieve to tell you that neither Agatha nor Wolf have yet returned since they set out, at a late hour, for the Cottage on the Cliff.”

If surprise deprived the fisher of all power of utterance for a short space, it was quickly succeeded by rage, consternation, and a torrent of ungovernable passions, which he kept under such little control in the present instance, that no sooner had Jessy told him of the cause of Agatha's going to the cliff, and of the note which had been written to her by her noble tenant, than he burst forth into the following exclamation:—

“Shiver my top-sails, if ever I forgive a soul of you!” proceeding to bestow the most violent invectives and abuse on every individual beneath his roof (save alone his daughter Jessy,) for having permitted Agatha and Wolf to depart to the Cottage without some suitable attendant to escort them safely there; nor did David escape without his share of reprehension in the business.—Even old Alice was called to account, and heartily chidden, as being the oldest and most experienced in the house, for suffering them to leave Herring Dale during his absence: of which the poor old creature pleaded her innocence, with tears in her eyes, alleging that Miss Jessy, who had more power over Agatha than any one else, had said and done all that she could to prevent her going to the cliff at so late an hour of the evening, but all to no purpose, for Miss seemed determined upon going, let what would happen, in consequence of the letter she had received from the great lady. “It was some time,” continued Alice, “before Miss Singleton could be prevailed upon to take Master Wolf along with her;”—so confident did our heroine express herself of finding protection

and kindness from the lady who had written to her in such terms of complacency and friendship; and Alice now offered to appeal to Miss Jessy and Miss Olive, and even to Claribelle, Miss Singleton's attendant, for the truth of her statement.

Olive, glad of any opportunity that might offer of throwing a dark shade on the merits of her father's favourite, whose superior qualifications she so greatly envied, was rejoiced on being thus called upon by Alice for a plain matter of fact, and perceiving that the tender-hearted Jessy was already dissolved in tears, and alarmed and trembling at her father's impetuosity, now eagerly exclaimed:—

"Why father, how can you think of blaming Alice, or any of us, for what Miss Singleton chooses to do? how could we help her going out if she was determined on it after all of us kept reminding her how late it was, and how very improper for a young lady, like her, to be rambling about wild heaths and cliffs, at the time every body else began to think of their beds? I am sure we did all we could, didn't we, Jessy, to prevent her taking such an imprudent step while you were out of the way; but she knew that there was nobody to control her, and so she did as she pleased, didn't she, Jess?—We all tried, but to no purpose, to keep her in doors; there was Jessy, she cried, and said, 'don't go, pray don't!' and Alfred went down upon his knees; and Alice and David and I did all we could.—But what did it signify with such a perverse creature?—Even her favourite Wolf had no power over her, and it was as much as he could do to persuade her to let him go along with her; which I protest I think was very strange for a young lady of her extraordinary sense and prudence: but I wish, father, you may find Miss Singleton quite so prudent as you always imagined her to be. If Jessy and I had done such a thing as this, you would never have forgiven us! but I suppose your favourite may do just as she pleases without being called to account for it.—Dressed too in all her best; it had an oddish look, I must needs own, for such a clever, *modest* young lady as Miss Singleton!"

"As modest as you, Miss Olive, any day in the week, if you

come to that," cried Claribelle, colouring with resentment, and now coming forward to plead the cause of her young mistress; "and with a thousand times more discretion than you.—Indeed it was never called in question so before, and if Mr. Blust allows you to go on thus, disparaging my sweet, virtuous and lovely Miss Agatha in this shameful and abominable manner, it is more than I will, Miss Olive, though I lose your father's good opinion for ever. As for what Miss Singleton has done, I dare say she can give a proper account of it as she has done in every action of her life, and it is well for you, Miss Olive, that her father, poor Captain Singleton, is not alive to hear you speak of his daughter so disrespectfully!"

"Captain Singleton indeed!" cried Olive with a disdainful toss of her head, "and what if he was?—who was he, pray?—and who is *she*?—nothing but a couple of *beggars* coming from nobody knew where, and sticking themselves up for fine gentry when they had scarce a halfpenny to call their own.—Besides, if you come to that, Mistress Claribelle, I don't believe that your mistress was any more the daughter of Captain Singleton than I am—it was all a fudge!"

The fisher, who had been nearly stunned by the intelligence he had received, and agonized by the mysterious flight of Agatha Singleton, had for the last five minutes been employed in again drawing on his large jack-boots, which he had so hastily dragged off; he had not therefore distinctly heard one sentence of the contentious conversation which had passed between Olive and Claribelle, till the saucy speech which the former had pronounced, in a higher key, relative to Miss Singleton, at length reached his ear, as also the audible sobs which now issued from the bosom of the afflicted Claribelle; who, distracted by the loss of her young mistress, and stung to the heart by the bitter reproaches cast upon her by the vindictive, envious and malicious Olive, hurst into an agony of tears which she had no longer the power of restraining. This no sooner caught the observation of the fisher, than he was aroused to a pitch of fury which became almost uncontrollable, and dashing a large glass of brandy which he was just going to swallow with

violence on the floor, at the same time darting a look of fury on his termagant daughter, he vociferated:—

“ You she-coekatrice!—you abominable Jezebel!—you—you—you—what d—l’s breeze have you been kicking up now, to set that poor girl’s pumps a-going in this manner?—Shiver my top-sails, if once I come foul of you if I don’t knock you down as flat as a flounder, you vixen, you!—Mistress Clary, what’s that hussy been saying to you?”

“ Nay, father, don’t be so violent,” cried Jessy, now stepping before her sister to hide her from the sight of her enraged father, “ poor Claribelle is only shocked and thus affected by the alarming fears she is enduring for our dear Agatha! indeed, indeed it was nothing that Olive has said—for—for—for Olive has said nothing that——”

Jessy could proceed no further, and was herself hardly conscious of what she had uttered, so great were now her terrors for her sister, towards whom the fisher was approaching with rapid strides, at the same moment that he brandished a stick in his hand in no very gentle manner.

“ Why how the d—l, Jess, can you look in my face and tell such a confounded lie?” uttered he, by no means softened or appeased even by the tears of his darling. “ Did I not hear the hussy browbeating that poor wench, till flesh and blood could not bear it, about poor dear Agatha Singleton?—but, by the Lord Harry, I will make her repent it!—let me come at her, I say! I’ll teach her manners, I warrant me,—she shall laugh the wrong side of her mouth this once, shiver my top-sails if she shan’t!”

The fisher now attempted to push Jessy aside. The poor girl uttered a fearful shriek, but clung so fast to her sister, that it was impossible for her father to aim a blow at Olive without striking at the breast of this interceding, peacemaking angel; and although his rage was by no means appeased, yet he threw down the stick, and, walking away as rapidly as he had advanced towards them, seated himself quietly in his great elbow-chair, addressed a few words of consolatory kindness to the weeping Claribelle, and desired David to saddle the white naggie, and prepare himself to

mount Bloodhound, and accompany him immediately to the residence of Sam Russel, from there to Shelly's, whence they would proceed (with a body of stout seamen, which they could procure at a moment's notice) to the Cottage on the Cliff.

"To the Cottage on the Cliff, master?" cried David in some dismay.

"To the Cottage on the Cliff?" repeated the trembling Jessy, "and at this fearful hour of midnight?—Oh, dear father, pray wait for the morning before you venture on so rash a scheme.—Do but consider the peril and the danger to which, in your present heat of passion, you will be exposed."

"Pray listen to Miss Jessy, if you please, master," uttered David, retreating slowly towards the door, well knowing that out of it he must bolt like lightning if his master persisted to be obeyed.—David was right; for the fisher, on meeting only with this slight opposition to his wishes, vociferated in a voice of thunder,—

"But I don't please, you mongrel! I don't please to sit down contented with the loss of a dear suffering angel, when I should be following the scent of the bloodhounds, who have got hold of her in their infernal clutches. No, shiver my top-sails if I don't pull the Cottage down over the old Duchess's ears if they don't tell me what they have done with my Agatha Singleton! I'll teach her outlandish ladyship better manners than to come into this country to poach upon other people's manors—a sly old puss! I will let her know what business she has to trouble her head a about poor orphan girl that don't want any of her favours."

By this time David had made his exit to prepare for this second rash expedition to the Cottage on the Cliff: well aware that all opposition now shown to the will of his master would be unavailing, and only tend to increase his impatience to be gone.

Jessy too was obliged to subscribe to the necessity of appearing to acquiesce in all his plans relative to the rescue of the so greatly regretted Agatha Singleton: while Claribelle secretly rejoiced in seeing the preparations for his immediate departure from Herring Dale, in the hope that he should hear some tidings of her dear young lady; and, perceiving that Miss Blust had gained but

little triumph by the malicious insinuations she had thrown out against the immaculate purity of her beloved mistress, but on the contrary had incurred the just and merited displeasure of her father for the inhumanity of her disposition, Claribelle endeavoured to compose her fluttered spirits, and to rely on the interposition of an ever kind and ruling Providence for the preservation of so lovely and faultless a being, and that ere long she would be restored to them again.

These were the reflections of poor Claribelle at the moment of the fisher's departure; who, neither regarding the tears of Jessy, the silent though affectionate looks of Alfred, the remonstrances of his old faithful housekeeper, nor the angry glances shot from the eyes of the so-highly offended Olive, gave once more his imperative orders to David to bring the horses up to the gateway.

"Are you then determined to go, father?" cried the trembling Jessy; "and without resting for a few hours after the fatigues of the day?—only think how half an hour's sleep would refresh and compose you!—Ah, could but your Jessy persuade you, and that my dearest father would but hear her!"

The fisher rested his eyes on the sweet, mild countenance of the lovely suppliant maid, and for a moment seemed irresolute in his purpose. At length he withdrew the sudden glance he had thrown on his affectionate child, half afraid to encounter such another suppliant look again; and whisking round with one of his usual circumbendibus movements, he made rapid strides towards the door, and with a voice more decided than ever, pronounced,—

"No, Jess, I will not hear you; though I had much rather hear the sound of that silver pipe than the sweetest music in a dance on a holiday; but when a man is resolved to do his duty, and knows that it cannot be delayed, he must not listen to any persuasions that will draw him from it, even though they come from one of the most tempting, dangerous things in nature—a woman! and shiver my top-sails, from a woman that I love too as dearly as my own heart-strings! but they would break, Jess, if I thought that I had not done my duty towards a poor girl that I have sworn to be a father to ever since she lost her own! so pray, Jess, let me quietly

depart, without any more of this soft foolery.—I tell you that I *will* go in search of Agatha Singleton to the *Cottage on the Cliff*, if the very devil himself blew a tempest in the winds, or showed his ugly black mug on the waters.”

To which Jessy replied,—

‘Alas, dear father, it is not the devil that has aught to do with the winds or the waters : but since you will go, may the watchful spirit that rules over both of them protect my father, and send him back in safety to his children and his home !’

By this time the fisher had advanced nearer to the door, but another look he dared not direct towards his Jessy ! for all the father was in his eyes and in his heart, as he caught the last sweet vibrations of her artless tongue ; and, nodding a “good bye” to all, yet neither directly nor indirectly to any one of them, he darted like lightning out of the door, from thence proceeded to the gateway where David was waiting with the horses, and vaulting into the saddle of his own favorite mare, was out of sight of Herring Dale in a moment—David of course keeping pace with his impetuous master every inch of the way, and not presuming once, as they journeyed over the wild, stupendous and steep mountains, to interrupt the fisher’s cogitations, which were doubtless fixed on one only point of the compass, that which led to the now doubly hated and more than ever dreaded Cottage on the Cliff.

He left the party behind him strangely discomposed and agitated by their several feelings ; but the first object to which the gentle Jessy directed her attention, after the departure of her father, was to attempt to console or rather to pacify her irritated sister :—an *attempt* indeed it was, for at the first intercession of the gentle girl that she would try to compose her fluttered spirits, and retire to rest, she was pushed back with violence by Olive, who haughtily exclaimed,—

“I shall retire when it best pleases me ; so pray, Miss Jessy, keep your hands to yourself, for I shan’t budge an inch till I choose, for any of you ! you may all go to bed and welcome, and leave me here alone, I shall take no harm ;—and if I did, father, don’t care one bit what becomes of——”

Olive made a pause, and a sigh escaped in spite of her utmost efforts to prevent it : her proud heart had swelled almost to bursting ! Never had her father been so stern, or spoken so harshly, so unkindly towards her. Never had she seen him so angry, and never had she trembled till now in his presence. It was plain that he did not love her ; while his fondness for her sister Jessie formed a contrast which was too mortifying to bear,—at a moment too when the only object she loved, and who she imagined loved her, was far distant. Struggling to suppress the contending passions which agitated a bosom that like proud swelling waves beat with the most stormy violence, she felt that they were suddenly repelled at last by one only softer sensation, yet at the same time more powerful and prompt in its effect than all the rest besides, and that was *love* ! and she thought that Leontine Craftly was the only being who had the power to soothe her ; but that he was not there to exert it stopt all further utterance :—she burst into an agony of tears, which was quickly followed by a strong fit of hysteric affection.

The alarmed and affectionate Jessie flew to her side, calling her by the most endearing and tender of epithets ;—her darling Olive, her own dear sister,—hanging the while over her now deathly pale and even distorted features with the most unutterable anguish ; and while old Alice chafed her temples with all the remedies usually resorted to on such occasions, Alfred and Claribelle were employed in trying to unfasten the clasp which was affixed to a ribband, and drawn tightly round her waist.

“That is right, mistress Claribelle,” cried old Alice, glancing at the uncommon rotundity of Olive’s waist with some strange and singular forebodings, which had more than once lately filled her mind with an old woman’s prophecy that all was not *exactly as it ought to be* with Miss Blust.—She now actually put on her spectacles, exclaiming,—“Miss Olive is so prodigiously fond of tight-lacing that I don’t wonder at her fainting, I am sure ! mercy on me, there’s no room for a rat, much more for—Here’s ribbands and bands !—one would think that *the child* could scarcely breathe, with so much squeezing and ramming and cramming :—but pull

them all off, good mistress Claribelle, and give the poor *chick* a little liberty!"

Claribelle was about to perform a task which seemed so natural, and so highly necessary for the recovery of the apparently insensible Olive; but she uttered so loud a scream at the very moment that Claribelle was going to unloose her, and pushed the waiting-woman from her with an effort of such extraordinary force in a *fainting* lady, that Claribelle immediately desisted from the office which old Alice had been so anxious to invest her with the honor of.

"How dare you offer to undress me?" uttered the *offended* fair one, her eyes flashing fury at the same instant: "I don't want your assistance, I assure you! I don't want the assistance of any body, and desire that you will all leave me alone."

"Dear Olive, why will you so unkindly refuse the services of all around you?" cried Jessy, pale, trembling, and fearfully astonished at the peculiar expression which old Alice ever and anon threw upon her sister; and, imagining that the presence both of Alfred and Miss Singleton's attendant were disagreeable to her, she entreated they would retire to rest, and leave Olive to the care of Alice and herself, at the same moment that the sweet girl kindly thanked them for the assistance they had rendered to her sister in a moment of such alarm; and Claribelle very gladly availed herself of the permission that was granted to her, and retired more disgusted than ever with the manners and disposition of Miss Blast.

"Now, dearest Olive, let me prevail on you to go to bed, cried Jessy, approaching Olive, and tenderly kissing her pale cheek.

"Am I dear to you Jessy?" replied Olive, half *returning* her embrace, and in a tone quite inconsistent with her *general* haughty and petulant manner of addressing her:—

"Yes, Olive, dear as ever!" uttered Jessy, nearly melted to tears: "and oh, far dearer than ever now that you are unwell, and require the attention of that sister, who, in sickness or in health, has never willingly neglected you. Come lean on my arm, and I will lead you to our chamber."

"Ay do, Miss Olive," cried old Alice, again surveying her with

the most scrutinizing attention, "and while Miss Jessy is putting you to bed, and all that, I will just make you a cup of *nice caudle*, which will set you all to rights again I warrant me;—and make you sleep as sound as a top, if nothing does not waken you."

Old Alice now trotted off into the kitchen to stir up the fire, and muttering something to herself, in so low a voice, that the sense was wholly unintelligible to both of the sisters. Jessy, being now left alone with Olive, had no difficulty in persuading her to go to her chamber; she appeared indeed unusually fatigued, and complained of the weariness that oppressed her; but it was not wholly the sudden indisposition of Olive which had so seriously alarmed the fears of Jessy, for she very naturally cast her eyes in the same direction that she observed Alice had been doing, while she assisted her sister to undress, and, unlacing her corsets, discovered an alteration in Olive's shape that both shocked and surprised her beyond the powers of description.—Scarce could her trembling hands perform the task she was employed upon, and scarce could she conceal the pangs which now unutterably assailed her, or hide her heart's anguish from the prying eyes of her sister, who was no sooner undressed and in bed than she protested that she felt quite recovered, and should sleep soundly.

"Heaven grant that you may, my beloved sister," whispered Jessy: "and that your slumbers may be——"

The voice of Jessy grew more tremulous—tears gushed out of her eyes—her heart fluttered as though it would burst its very confines!—and she would instantly have betrayed her strong and powerful emotions, if she had not suddenly made an excuse to quit the room, telling Olive she would return presently with the caudle, and then retire herself to bed.

"Do, dear Jessy! or I shall fall fast asleep," was the reply of Olive, as Jessy gently drew the curtains around her.

But what were the reflections of poor Jessy as she slowly measured her steps back, and joined old Alice in the kitchen! The youth she had once loved—and the sister that her heart (spite of all her failings) still adored!—she had always loved Olive, though Olive loved not her. That youth, once so loved, had deceived her:

and that sister, still so fondly cherished, had fallen a victim to his base perfidious arts ! and that still dearer object, far dearer than all the world besides—her earthly treasure, her father,—her kind, generous, unsuspecting father, his heart must bleed too ! the thought was distraction to poor Jessy !—yet pity for the poor deluded Olive was the predominant sensation of her ever gentle breast, and she determined that not a thought—not a look—not a tear, or a sigh breathed from her full heart, should betray her fears to Alice of the fatal discovery she had made.

But dissimulation was not the *forte* of poor Jessy, in whose character ingenuousness formed the most lovely feature. Her very look therefore informed old Alice that she guessed at the situation of her sister.

“ Have you made the caudle, Alice ? ” inquired Jessy, in a soft, low and tremulous voice, and with a look half averted from the keen and penetrating glance of the old housekeeper, who replied,—

“ Yes, my dear Miss Jessy, it is all ready, and I will take it upstairs if you please, and see how matters stand now with Miss Olive ! well-a-day, I have put on my spectacles to some purpose, this evening, sure enough ! but don’t you grieve, my dear Miss Jessy, don’t you grieve—for heaven knows it was no fault of thine that folks have turned out so wicked !—but, dear heart ! dear heart ! who would have thought such a thing of Mr. Craftly ?—a base, vile young man, to come and warm himself by my poor master’s fireside, like the snake did with the husbandman, only to sting him to the heart, by ruining his child ! oh, Miss Jessy ! what will this world come to, when such foul ways are practised without shame and without punishment !—no, no, not without punishment ! crimes do not go without punishment ; though they seem to prosper, yet they *will not* do so, I warrant me they cannot prosper, Miss Jessy ! Heaven is more just to the innocent.

Poor Jessy during this oration of old Alice stood like the statue of despair, grief, and terror : and, had she not employed her hands in cooling the caudle with a spoon that lay on the table, would have seemed utterly without life or motion, so pale and now inanimate were her sweet, mild and seraphic features ; but the

words *ruin* and *Olive* aroused and startled her; and, fixing her blue orbs on the chattering Alice, she wildly exclaimed,—

“No, no, Alice! it cannot be! you are mistaken in the cause of my sister’s sudden illness.—Craftly cannot be such a monster of depravity and cruelty!—Ruin my sister—break my father’s heart, and bring down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave? no, no, Alice! it cannot be!”

Alice shook her head, and again replied,—

“I tell you, my sweet child, that Mr. Craftly *has* ruined your sister;—and that it is no use denying it when things speak so plainly for themselves.—Lank-a-mercy! did I not put on my spectacles when mistress Claribelle was going to unlace her?—and did not I see—but no matter, one word is as good as a thousand. The mischief is done and cannot be undone, as the saying is—but Miss Olive is undone, and we are all undone, by the wickedness of your kinsman Craftly. The vile young profligate! would that my ten fingers were all tenpenny nails that I might scratch the eyes out of his head, a *varment*,—to come into an honest man’s house, and moreover the house of his kinsman too, to do such a thing!”

Alice had pitched her tone in a somewhat higher key as her choler waxed warmer, and Jessy, alarmed, fearful that she would awaken Olive, if she slept—or that some distinct sound might reach her ear, intreated Alice to be quiet, and step up stairs with her to see how her sister was.

“But pray, pray be cautious, Alice,” uttered Jessy, “since indeed I fear it too evident that Craftly is a villain, and my poor unhappy sister betrayed by his perfidious arts.—Let us not then add to what she suffers by casting any reflection that may wound her!”

“You need not fear that, my dear Miss Jessy,” cried Alice, “I hope I know my duty better to a poor suffering sinner, for such she is,—and being harsh to her, poor thing, is not the way to bring her to repentance. But, as matters stand, only think, Miss Jessy, what is to be done in the business if Miss Olive grows worse, as I have a great notion she will do. There—there—there will be——”

“Will be what, Alice?” cried Jessy, trembling so she could scarcely stand; and her terrors were by no means lessened upon Alice, somewhat bluntly, replying:—

"Something happen before the morning, Miss Jessie, as sure as I am a living soul!"

The climax of poor Jessie's consternation was now arrived; and bursting into tears, she was obliged to own to Alice, in a voice scarcely articulate, that she considered Olive's situation highly critical.

"I thought you did, my tender lamb," exclaimed the old woman, "although I knew you did not like to say so: but don't ye cry, Miss Jessie, don't ye—let us go our ways up stairs, and see how Miss Olive is now."

To this proposal Jessie immediately consented, and on their arrival at Olive's chamber, they found her fast asleep.

"Thank Heaven!" softly whispered Jessie, "my sister sleeps!" and motioning Alice not to make the slightest noise that might awaken her, kindly bade her good night.

"If you should want me, Miss Jessie, you can but softly tap at the door of Mrs. Claribelle's chamber, and she will presently call me," repeated Alice as she gently closed the door and left the sisters alone; the one unconscious at this moment of the catalogue of human miseries she had drawn down on her own head, and on those of her anguished sister and aged sire: the other, lamenting the frailty of her fallen relative with tears of the most poignant grief, resting on a cheek pure and white as monumental alabaster; tears which might have gemmed the morning rose or spotless lily, so pure, so hallowed was the fount from whence they flowed!

Jessy having very quickly undressed, crept to the side of her sleeping sister as gently as possible—taking care not to extinguish the lamp, which she trimmed and left burning: and Jessy tried to slumber too; her weary, shocked and exhausted spirits stood in need of repose, but that repose was not for Jessy! the horror of poor Olive's situation, the loss of her beloved friend Agatha Singleton, the uncertainty of the danger to which her father had exposed himself for the sake of that dear absent friend, the perfidy of Craftly's base and dishonourable conduct, and the heart rending grief which would so suddenly overwhelm her poor father when he should discover the indiscretion of her sister, rendered it impossible for Jessy to close her eyes for one moment. Besides,

she had another dreadful apprehension that alarmed her mind in consequence of what old Alice had foreboded ; she feared that Olive would be *taken ill*, and that she might not happen to hear her. In short, Jessy had so many fears, that it was not till she beheld the returning light again peeping through the windows that she ventured to close her weary eyelids, and it might be nearly an hour that Jessy had slept when she was suddenly awakened by an icy hand grasping hers as if in terror—as if in anguish ! the lamp was still faintly gleaming : Jessy opened her eyes and found the icy hand that clasped her's was Olive's.

“ My sister ! ” murmured Jessy, “ my beloved sister ! speak to me ! ”

But Olive spoke not.—Her cheek was cold as her hand ; her eyes haggard and wild ; and her lips moved,—but the sound that issued from them was faint, powerless, and wholly unintelligible—still her cold damp hand firmly grasped Jessy's.

“ Dearest Olive, let me hasten to procure you assistance,” cried the alarmed Jessy, bending over her, and pressing her cheek close to hers. “ You are ill, my sister—very ill—allow me to call Alice.”

But a scream from the suffering Olive very soon brought the old woman into the room, and Claribelle at the same moment,—the frightened Jessy imploring both of them in the most piercing accents to save the life of her sister.

Alice besought the sweet girl to compose herself, and to retire for a few moments : to call up Walter, the farm-man, who slept always in the house, and to despatch him for a medical gentleman who had long been in the habit of attending the family, and who only lived two fields distant from Herring Dale.

“ In the meanwhile, my dear Miss Jessy, we will do all we can to relieve the sufferings of your sister,” cried the old woman cautiously, “ but do—do—not come into the room, if you can help it, my sweet child, nor yet so violently alarm yourself. There is no danger that I can see at—at—at present.—” Alice paused—“ go, my tender lamb, and do as I have bidden you.”

Jessy uttered not a word, terror had deprived her almost of the power of exertion ;—but she flew to execute her mission as spee-

dily as possible, and Alice returned to the chamber of the sufferer.

The movements of Jessy were as rapid as lightning. Walter was instantly aroused from his slumbers and despatched for the doctor: which was the business only of a few moments, and he arrived at Herring Dale in a short space of time. But alas! the shortest space of time at such a period is critical to the anguished sufferer, and so it proved with the unfortunate Olive, who, before the messenger returned with the worthy old Doctor Lessington, had given birth to a still-born male infant; and in less than an hour after her delivery, in spite of the utmost precaution that was used on the occasion by so skilful a practitioner, and every remedy resorted to that could be thought of—expired! amidst the frantic shrieks of her agonized sister; the tears and lamentations of poor old Alice and the frightened Claribelle; and the horror, consternation, and inexpressible concern of Doctor Lessington; who however had nothing to reproach himself with, as to the immediate cause of so sudden and terrible a catastrophe. *He had* done his duty, and the management of Alice toward the sufferer had been perfectly correct even before his assistance was called in. He could not have done more, and although he admitted that Olive's sufferings had been prematurely produced by the effects of internal agitation and violent passions, to which the doctor was well aware that Miss Blust was frequently subject, and had often told her of it, yet he felt convinced that it was the awful visitation of Almighty Providence, whose unerring hand had directed the blow, and had permitted it to fall. Who could search the sacred page of Heaven's own eternal register to elucidate the *mystery*? alas, no mortal eye could reach or penetrate that secret—only known to the most high and mighty One! a flower had fallen, but it was a blighted flower; the spoiler had cropt its early bloom, and it was doomed to perish by its fall!

These were among the reflections of Doctor Lessington, as he viewed the pale and melancholy remains of the once lovely and so lately blooming Olive Blust; whom he had known from the earliest dawn of her childhood's happy days, the pride of her father's heart, and the idol of her fond and gentle sister; and although he

knew that Olive had faults of temper and slight caprices in her disposition, which often vexed the fisher and tormented the good-natured Jessy, and which her growing years had not corrected, softened, or amended;—yet her untimely end, and the apparent cause of it, had shocked and surprised the worthy doctor even beyond the powers of description! for he had not the remotest thoughts that the faults of Olive Blust extended beyond a little childish levity or girlish vanity; and the few words that old Alice had whispered in his ear as to the cause of Miss Blust's sudden illness, and of the real state of her situation at the moment of his entrance to the chamber, had made him stand aghast with involuntary surprise and horror not to be expressed; and while he hastened by every expedient to relieve her, his heart bled for the father and the sister of the unhappy sufferer. Still he had not dreamt of the catastrophe which was so shortly to follow. There was no apparent symptom of danger till within a few minutes of her dissolution; and the doctor then found that no mortal means could avert the awful mandate. Yet mortal means were as assiduously applied, and every effort of human skill resorted to: nor did the sufferer seem at all sensible of her approaching end. She had conversed with her sister but only a moment previous to her breathing her last sigh!—and had expressed a wish to see her child, and with this wish Doctor Lessington thought proper to comply. He beckoned to Alice to show her the infant, but whispered that the awful scene was about to close for ever.

Alice approached slowly toward the bedside, and uncovered the face of the child. The hand of Olive was at this moment clasped in Jessy's;—a cold damp perspiration hung on the features of the dying girl, and her eyes emitted a momentary flash as they glanced on the face of the infant!—but, like a sudden meteor in the sky, that flash was seen no more;—her eyes remained fixed—but they were void of any expression. They had been removed from the child, and now rested on Jessy's face while they retained the power to do so, and her hand clasped Jessy's at the moment that life departed!

"It is now all over, and the sufferings of your sister are no more," cried Doctor Lessington, gently endeavouring to force the

hand of the frantic Jessy from that of the lifeless Olive!—"Dearest, beloved girl, useless is this tide of overwhelming grief, unavailing to the spirit that is departed, and distracting to your friends. Come, dearest Jessy, listen to the voice of your father's old friend: retire with me, my love, into another apartment, and leave Alice and this good woman to perform the last sad, but necessary duties on this melancholy occasion.—You can be of no service now, my dear girl, in this chamber, and I must, indeed I *must* force you from it."

"Go, my tender lamb!" cried the weeping Alice, whose heart bled at every pore for the sufferings of the gentle girl, and the awful and untimely fate of the unfortunate Olive; and who felt that she alone was left to exert herself, in the absence of her dear master, whose arrival she shuddered to encounter. "Go, my tender lamb!" repeated she, "and Doctor Lessington will talk to you. Dear Miss Jessy, pray go!—for while I see you take on so sadly, I cannot do what I ought to do."

"Stay, stay one moment, Sir, and I will attend you," cried Jessy, casting one more look on the lifeless body of her sister, and bursting into a fresh gush of tears as she frantically exclaimed,—

"Oh Doctor Lessington! oh Doctor Lessington! and are these pale cold insensible remains all that is left of my beautiful sister? and yon little lifeless image too! oh, would that had still been spared of our lost Olive! oh, how fondly would Jessy have loved it—Jessy, Jessy would have been a mother to it—yes, Jessy would never have deserted it!"

The tears of poor Jessy now flowed without control. She sobbed convulsively;—she was young, and her philosophy was not proof against a blow so severe. She had loved Olive in spite of all her faults, and she had ever been indulgent and kind to all those faults: blind she had not been, it is true, to the failings of her sister, but those failings she had never exposed: her father too had parted in anger with poor Olive! he had chidden her severely, and that severity, alas! had perhaps occasioned her premature death, and that of her infant!—and all for the sake of *Agatha Singleton!*—never till this moment did Jessy regret that

Agatha Singleton had come under their peaceful, happy roof: happy and peaceful till she was received beneath it.—A moment's reflection, however, brought Jessy to do more justice to the exalted virtues of her lovely absent friend.

Was it the fault of Agatha Singleton that Olive had acted so indiscreetly, or that Leontine Craftly had behaved so basely?—and had not Agatha warned Olive, as she had before done herself, of his perfidious arts!—She too might have fallen a victim, had not the warning voice of Agatha Singleton prevented such a catastrophe by its timely caution and friendly admonition. What right then had she to accuse Agatha of the calamity which the weakness of her too credulous and unhappy sister had drawn upon herself and her afflicted family? Had not Olive with scorn refused the advice and rejected the counsel of Agatha Singleton, who had long penetrated the deceptive character of their kinsman Craftly, and was Agatha's warning ever attended to?—or would not this misfortune have happened to Olive if Agatha had not been there?

Ashamed of having in any way condemned her amiable friend, and lamenting she was not there to condole with her in her grief, poor Jessy suffered Doctor Lessington to lead her from the scene of such complicated distress, horror, and consternation, to an adjoining apartment, where every object she beheld reminded her that she had no longer a sister. It was in the little oak parlour, where the portrait of Leontine Craftly was suspended over the mantle-piece.

"Remove that monster from my sight," cried Jessy, as she entered, leaning on the arm of Doctor Lessington. "My poor father will tear it to atoms when he beholds it. Remove it hence, I pray you, good doctor. The sight of it distracts my already tortured mind."

The look of Jessy was at this moment wild and disordered. Her cheek was flushed, and her pulse beat high and feverish!

"My love, you must compose yourself," cried Doctor Lessington. "You have felt much, doubtless, for the sufferings of your sister. You had always a kind heart, my sweet Jessy."

"Which has been constantly torn with anguish, and repaid

with ingratitude, for all the kindness it has shown to those objects that it so dearly loved ;” cried Jessy, with a mournful shuddering sigh ; “ pray, Sir, have the goodness to take down that picture of one of the most false and worthless of your sex.—If you knew how that picture distresses me, you would not suffer it to remain there a moment. It speaks only of my dying sister. Alas, it tells me that Olive is no more, and also by whose arts she has been betrayed, by whose cruel hands she has sunk to an untimely grave. Remove it, Sir, I beseech you !”

“ Execrable villain !” murmured Doctor Lessington, as he tore down the picture, and hurried out of the apartment, wishing to conceal if possible his emotion from the already heart-broken Jessy.—“ May your crimes meet the punishment they deserve, and the woes you have heaped on the heads of a peaceful, amiable and innocent family (innocent till you corrupted one of its members) be hurled down in tenfold vengeance on your own !” But these words reached not the ears of Jessy. Her exhausted spirits for many successive weary hours had reduced her to a state of the most powerless depression, and when the Doctor returned to her, he found her in the most alarming state of indisposition, inasmuch that he was obliged to call Claribelle to attend her.

“ I will lay her on the bed of my dear mistress,” cried Claribelle, gently leading her by the arm ; “ it is not near the chamber of her sister, and she will see nothing to alarm or distress her—though, Heaven knows, this has been a night of the most fearful calamity that I ever witnessed since the day I was born.—The loss of my dear young lady, Sir, was enough to break my heart :—but what has since happened may my eyes never witness again ! and then poor Mr. Blust :—but come, dear Miss Jessy, I won’t add to your sufferings, my sweet young lady.”——Claribelle led out the passive Jessy, who was incapable of answering a word ; and it was not till the doctor had administered a strong opiate, to compose her agitated spirits, that he ventured to leave her to repose, Claribelle promising to watch her if she awoke.

And all this while the poor youth, Alfred, had endured the utmost state of anxiety that could be imagined in the remote apartment in which he lay :—and though, like Claribelle, he had been

dismissed in the early part of Miss Blust's indisposition, and returned to his chamber, yet poor Alfred could not sleep. He had lost his companion, his dear brother Wolf;—and he had lost his dear sister, Agatha Singleton, whom he loved because Wolf loved her:—and the violence of the Fisher Blust had alarmed and terrified him.—He certainly did not love his sister Olive so much as Jessy, but he had been frightened at the severity which her father had used toward her, and when she was taken ill had truly pitied her, and offered any means in his power to contribute toward her recovery.

He had been desired by Jessy to go to bed, and to bed he went, but he could not sleep.—He listened, and imagined that he heard a groan issue from the chamber where Olive and Jessy slept.—He started up. He listened again and again, the groan was repeated.

"My sister Olive is surely worse or dying!" thought he,—and at that moment the faint moan died away in silence.—"It was surely fancy or illusion," thought Alfred, and tried to compose himself to sleep.

But from this sleep he was shortly awakened by hearing very plainly the piercing shrieks of Olive, which so speedily awakened also Claribelle, and old Alice, and the confusion and bustle which afterwards ensued made Alfred conclude, as really was the case, that the groans of Olive were no sleeping dream but actual reality. Hastily he arose and dressed himself, and as hastily proceeded down the staircase. In his way he encountered Claribelle, and impatiently demanded to know the cause of the confusion, alarm and terror which prevailed.

"Is my sister Olive dying?" inquired he.

To which, pale and almost breathless, Claribelle replied,—

"No, not dying, I hope, Mr. Alfred; but in truth most alarmingly ill. She has frightened us all out of our senses, I am sure! but—but—when the doctor comes we shall know more about it.—Miss Jessy has just sent for him."

"And why did not my sister Jessy rather choose to make me her messenger?" said Alfred, with great anxiety, "I would have flown through fire and water to have served the children of my benefactor, my father, my protector!"

"There is no one doubting it my dear Mr. Alfred," cried Claribelle; "but there was a reason, a very particular reason why you could not be considered the most proper messenger on such an occasion;—nor must you inquire any further. I dare not answer you. Retire to your chamber and compose yourself."

So extraordinary a reply not only hurt poor Alfred, but filled him with the most dreadful apprehensions that poor Olive was dangerously ill; and Claribelle having suddenly quitted him, he had no alternative but to return to his solitary chamber, and there wait till the return of daylight: and, in the early morning, Alfred crept down stairs to the kitchen some time after the awful scene had closed for ever.

Olive was no more, he was now informed by the weeping Claribelle, but the cause of her sudden demise was delicately concealed. Notwithstanding, the youth Alfred shed tears abundantly over her untimely death, the melancholy reflections produced by which were greatly increased by the loss also of Agatha Singleton, the absence of his dear Wolf, and the alarming account which he received of the sudden indisposition which had now attacked the lovely and amiable Jessy.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"Bring me a father that so loved his child,
Whose joy of her is overwhelmed like mine,
And bid *him* speak of patience;
For brother men
Can counsel, and speak comfort to the grief
Which they themselves feel not."

SLOWLY and mournfully passed successive hours before the return of the Fisher Blust to his now cheerless and melancholy dwelling. It was towards the close of the evening that his accustomed whistle announced his arrival at Herring Dale; and the afflicted family, but for the friendly assistance and advice of the excellent Doctor Lessington, had been incapable of performing the duties

of their sad occupation, which was partly to watch by the bedside of Jessy, who was now the sufferer, while Alfred and Claribelle, by turns, took their station in the silent chamber of her who had been so suddenly, and let us hope happily, released from all mortal suffering.

Jessy, however, was somewhat recovered from the dreadful torpor which had so heavily oppressed her shocked spirits, and rendered her situation so exceedingly alarming to her friends in the early part of the day. It was possible that she was more sensible of acute anguish, but she was at the same time more collected. Doctor Lessington had told her how absolutely necessary was exertion at this present crisis of complicated distress, and cautiously hinted that, as the return of her father was now every moment to be expected, his afflictions would be doubly increased by seeing her yield to such excessive grief, and so little able to console him.

"Besides, my lovely girl," cried this worthy man, still calmly addressing her in the gentlest manner that was possible, "it is actually impiety to arraign the will of your Heavenly Father, whose purpose is always wise, unerring and likewise unchangeable,—to say nothing of the useless pangs which you are inflicting on your own heart, and consequently on that of your father when he shall presently arrive and behold you thus;—you the darling of his aged heart, and now, by divine fiat, rendered the only tie that binds him to existence. Arouse then, my sweet Jessy, and exert those angelic qualities of mind and disposition with which Heaven has so amiably gifted you. It is now your poor father that will most need our consolation; he has much to encounter on his arrival hither.—Prepare yourself to meet him, if not without anguish, without weakness.—We must strengthen *him*—he will be incapable of strengthening *you*.—You must acquire fortitude, resignation too, if possible, from yourself! *from Heaven!*—pray for it, and it will not be denied to you, and try to impart it to your suffering parent."

"Indeed, indeed I will endeavour to follow your counsel, Sir," cried the weeping Jessy, preparing, with the assistance of Claribelle, to accompany Doctor Lessington to the little oak parlour

where every thing was in readiness for the melancholy arrival of the fisher ; " it is very good of you to remind me of my duty to my poor father. Yes, yes, he will want a comforter, a consoler in this heavy hour of trial to his poor wrung old heart. But, ah me, I so dreaded his coming. Unless he brings that angel Agatha Singleton, along with him, I fear that even Jessie will not have the power of lessening his affliction. Yet I will try to hide my tears. Come, Sir, I am now ready to attend you down to the oak parlour :—yes, my father will be sure to take his station there the very first thing ; but pray, Dr. Lessington, let nothing shock his feelings ; let every thing be instantly removed out of the way that may chance to put him in mind of our poor lost—" Jessie paused ; she could not pronounce the name of Olive without a renewal of her heart's deepest anguish, and she did not, therefore, pronounce it at all, but tremulously finished her sentence with—

" You understand me, Sir ?—I know that you do perfectly understand me, and further explanation is unnecessary."

To which Dr. Lessington, as he took her hand to lead her down stairs, replied—

" Yes, yes, my sweet girl, I were an insensible brute if I did not fully comprehend your meaning. No, my love ! I have taken care that when your father arrives, there will be nothing immediately to distress his feelings. I have done all that is absolutely necessary in the absence of your father, at this mournful and momentous crisis of affairs, and more I cannot take upon myself to do without his permission."

With these words of the worthy Doctor, poor Jessie seemed satisfied, and with a palpitating heart she sat fearfully awaiting the arrival of her father ; having been prevailed upon to take some slight refreshment, when Claribelle prepared some coffee for Dr. Lessington, and poor Alfred was called down from the melancholy office which had been assigned to him by old Alice, to partake of it with Jessie and the Doctor.

The poor youth entered with slow and unsteady steps the little oak parlour, where he had so lately been accustomed to see the whole of the family assemble cheerfully to enjoy their evening repast ; where often the fisher had sat at the head of the table, re-

counting in full glee and spirits many a humorous and merry tale.

Alas, how changed was now the smiling gaiety which so lately frolicked there ! There were no lively blooming countenances now to gladden his approach, no silver-tongued voices to welcome the happy and joyous meal.

No, it was the pale faces of Jessy and of Dr. Lessington sitting close to her, and endeavouring to compose her, that first attracted the attention of Alfred upon his entrance into the room :—and, as he silently took his station at the tea-table, not a word was addressed to each other by either of the afflicted party. Alfred dared not trust his voice to speak, and Jessy could not speak for the life of her. Once, indeed, the languid expression of her so lately lovely, radiant, and clear blue eyes, faintly glanced towards Alfred, and Alfred returned that glance with a look that seemed to say, “Sister, thy brother grieves to see thee thus, and would give worlds, were he but master of them, to chase the cloud that sits so darkly, but yet not frowningly, on that lovely brow, which, like May-day morning, once reflected naught but joy and smiles !”

But whatever Alfred thought, or felt for the lovely Jessy, his feelings would not permit him to express it, and he had no sooner partaken of this silent melancholy repast, than he again retired to keep Alice company, who had, according to the orders of Dr. Lessington, never quitted wholly the chamber that contained the remains of the unfortunate Olive Blust : and when Alice was obliged to be absent, her place was alternately supplied by Claribelle or Alfred, and often both of them remained silently watching, and dreading every hour to hear the signal that would announce the return of the fisher to his so suddenly changed, but once peaceful and happy abode of youth, mirth and innocence. And at length his whistle was heard at the gateway, both above and below, by his afflicted family.

“It is my master, as sure as I am alive, Mistress Claribelle,” exclaimed old Alice, in a fearful shuddering kind of tone, which instantly communicating a similar fear to the breast of the attendant, she replied mournfully—

“Oh yes, it is poor dear Mr. Blust come home at last ! I could

swear to his whistle at the gateway, could not you, Master Alfred?"

"Yes, there is none other like to it," uttered Alfred, trembling, as slowly he arose from his seat and walked to the window, the shutters of which were only half-closed, while those in the apartments below had been shut up all day; and this sight created some surprise to the fisher as he rode up to the gateway, occasioning him to utter the following exclamation, as he turned his horse's head towards David:

"Why, shiver my topsails, have they gone to roost already, and shut up the windows and doors before darkness is visible? What's the meaning of all this, I should be glad to know. Ring at the bell, Davy, ring like the very d—I in a gale of wind. Shiver my topsails! do they mean to keep us here all night, with a murrain to them? why don't some of them come and open the gate?"

This was no sooner pronounced by the Fisher Blust, with all the usual impatience of his disposition, than, applying his whistle to his mouth, he blew a tremendous blast, that very shortly brought Walter to the gate, and widely it gave entrance to the poor jaded beasts and their no less weary master and his squire David.

"Shiver my topsails! were you all asleep?" vociferated the fisher, in no very gentle tone; and, instantly dismounting, was rushing into the house when Walter, attempting to precede him, mournfully exclaimed,—

"Stay, stay, master, if you please; pray let me go before you!"

"No, shiver my topsails if you shall!—what the devil anchor's a-peak now?" uttered the fisher, hurrying on with rapid strides towards the entrance of his habitation; but here his passage was suddenly intercepted, and he started with involuntary surprise at the sight of his worthy old friend Dr. Lessington, who, gently taking his arm, exclaimed, in a compassionate though agitated voice,—

"My dear Blust, you do not perceive me here on an errand of an idle or pleasurable nature. I am in truth on a melancholy mission and have ill news to communicate to you: but bear it, my dear friend, bear it like a man!"

Thunderstruck by a preface so sudden and unexpected, and from lips that he so highly venerated, the countenance of the fisher fell like some sturdy oak of the forest, when a flash of lightning has darted on it and cleft it asunder.

His ruddy cheeks were now blanched with something worse than fear, for to fear he was a stranger; and his lips were bloodless, as they endeavoured to pronounce the name of "Jessy—"

"Has been unwell,—a little poorly," immediately replied Dr. Lessington, "but she is better. Yes, yes, thank Heaven, Jessy will be restored to you."

The eye of the fisher again brightened,—the colour which had receded from his cheek was quickly returning,—the blood of his lip rushing back to its animated post—and, less agitated, he exclaimed,—

"Shiver my topsails, if Jessy is well, why did you not tell me that before? but what has been the matter with my darling? That termagant Olive has, no doubt, been tormenting her since I have been gone, and the little soft melting fool has been making herself ill about it. Yes, yes, I know what has been the matter. That vixen, Olive, has been the cause of Jessy's being taken so poorly—was not she, Lessington?—Come tell me the truth, now!"

By this time they had gradually arrived at the entrance of the little oak parlour, the door of which was open, but Jessy was not there. Unable to meet the agonized glance of her poor father till Dr. Lessington had disclosed to him the whole fatal truth, she had withdrawn for a few moments until her presence was required.

The fisher walked in, and sat himself down in his elbow-chair; and the Doctor, taking another, sat close to his side.

"Give me your hand, Blust," uttered he, "and I will tell you the truth, and it is a melancholy truth that I am going to tell: nevertheless, it is the duty of a friend not to keep you now in ignorance of the dreadful calamity which has suddenly taken place in your family since your departure, and which no human means could have prevented, even if you had been present. Are you prepared, dear Blust, to hear what that is?"

A pressure of the hand was the only reply made by the fisher, and a sort of nod which signified yes, though he could not utter it.

Doctor Lessington embraced this hasty minute, it could not be delayed;—and firmly grasping the hand of honest Peter, he cautiously informed him that his unfortunate daughter Olive was no more! but then the Doctor was also under the absolute necessity, as a medical professor called in to her assistance, of disclosing the nature of the illness which had so suddenly produced the catastrophe,—surprise, indignation, rage, absolute fury, by turns harassed the feelings of the agonized and half-frantic father: and hastily grasping his sword, he swore he would that moment go and plunge it into the bosom of the accursed monster who had destroyed his child! Nor was the sudden demise of that child, nor the fatal cause of it, the only heart-galling reflection that lacerated the breast of the wretched parent. There was yet another pang which tortured his feelings even to the very quick—and that was the manner in which he had parted with Olive, and the severity he had used toward her. This, together with the harsh sentences which had escaped his lips, now rose in judgment against him, and wound him up to a pitch of madness; and, passing his hand across his forehead, he burst into a convulsive fit of laughter, which shocked and alarmed Dr. Lessington, although he knew that this momentary sensation would very quickly evaporate, and calmer moments succeed. He did not therefore interrupt him, when he exclaimed,—

“Lessington, take and hang me up like a dog, for I have killed my poor Olive. Shiver my top-sails, I have destroyed my child! Yes, yes, I remember what I said to her, and so she took it to heart—and died. Lessington, did you think that Peter Blast, who so loved his children that he would have plucked the eyes out of his old head sooner than they should have come to any harm, could have been such an infernal scoundrel? What! speak unkindly to my poor girl, when I should have opened my arms to receive her,—when I should have poured balm on the sorrows that a villain had occasioned her to feel!—but I spurned her; yes, with vilo reproaches I spurned my poor unhappy girl, and sent her myself to her long home. Lessington, shoot me! hang me up like a dog, I say, for I am not fit to live. I killed my Olive, and—and——”

The fisher's eyes glared widely—but his voice totally failed him : he hurst into a gush of tears, and, leaning his head on the shoulder of his friend, sobbed audibly. It was a seasonable relief to his so greatly oppressed heart, and the Doctor hailed it as a fit moment in which to offer the condolence and counsel of friendship. While the fisher raged, he had permitted the storm to blow ; but when the violence had subsided, like a skilful and experienced pilot, he directed the management of the vessel himself.

"My dear Blust," at length uttered he, "I will not, must not permit you to talk thus. You have nothing to reproach yourself with, regarding your daughter, except that you have been too indulgent to her faults ; for faults she had, which even a father's authority, nor a father's kindness, let me add, could not root out.

They were of her own forming ; the unhappy consequences which have ensued were, believe me, owing to the excess of her ungoverned and violent passions, and the fatal catastrophe such as no human means could prevent. Cease then to revile yourself as the guilty cause of your daughter's death. A wiser, a kinder hand than yours directed the blow. It has fallen ! who could avert it ? It is a heavy stroke, I will grant, to the heart of a father ; and those who are not fathers are not unmoved by it : but bear it manfully, bear it manfully, friend Peter ! You are no coward, you have faced danger, now bear affliction, for Heaven has still spared to you one earthly treasure. You have still a daughter, pure, uncontaminated as the first rose of summer. Jessy is an angel of smiling sweetness, gentleness, and truth. Her delicate frame has nearly sunk under the spectacle of the sufferings of her unfortunate sister : but I have talked to her, and reasoned with her, and she has listened to reason and is longing to embrace her father, who, let me hope, will listen to reason too."

The fisher was silent, but he grew more calm ; and a warm pressure of the hand, which he gave to his friend Lessington, manifested his respect and gratitude for the services that gentlemen had rendered to him when he imagined that all human consolation would have been useless and unavailing : and, calling for a glass of brandy, which was immediately given to him, he expressed a wish to see the remains of his unfortunate daughter.

"No, no, not to-night, Blust," uttered the worthy Doctor; "I must positively prohibit so distressing a trial of your feelings to-night. At a proper season that wish shall be complied with, but forbear to-night, and leave the rest to me."

"I must, I must; shiver my top-sails, I am but a sheer hulk, and must leave you to weather the cape, friend Lessington!" cried the fisher.

"And rest satisfied that I will do all that is necessary, dear Blust," answered the Doctor, exceedingly rejoiced to find his poor afflicted friend more composed and collected than he imagined he could have been after so severe a struggle with his violent and outraged feelings. He had now only one thing to dread, and that was his seeing Jessy, and he thought the sooner that was over the better. The very moment, therefore, that the fisher expressed this wish, he replied—

"See Jessy? certainly you shall, my dear Blust: I will go and bring her hither; but——"

The Doctor made a pause, which was filled up by the fisher suddenly exclaiming—

"But what—what are you afraid of, Lessington? Think you I cannot see my girl without making a fool of myself?"

"Surely you can, my dear Blust," returned the doctor, half smiling, "who said you were going to make a fool of yourself?—all I intended to observe was, that you are already aware Jessy has been unwell; and perhaps is suffering a little now from the effects of that indisposition."

"Shiver my top-sails! don't I know that?" now impatiently replied the fisher, "and do you think that I am going to make her worse? let me see her, that's all!"

The doctor went for Jessy, well knowing that all opposition would now be vain; and, in a moment, the poor girl was clasped in the arms of her fond, her doating father! in silence he kissed off the tears that trickled down her pale face; while he mechanically parted the profusion of fair hair that had fallen negligently over her snowy neck.

"Dear, dear father!" murmured Jessy in a soft, low and tremulous voice.

"What say'st thee, darling?" answered the fisher, his eyes suddenly and now intently examining every lineament of her faded countenance: and the expression of languor that pervaded it seemed to shock him with involuntary surprise. "Thee lookest poorly, my Jess," cried he, "but how could'st thee look well?—thee hast had a rough gale, and beest but a little cock-boat, which cannot set sail in stormy weather without upsetting, my Jess.—Jess, dost love thy poor old father:—I love thee, Jess!—and I loved my poor Olive!—where does she lie, Jess?—in thy own little chamber, where you both slept together ever since ye were little ones?—and there have I looked on ye many and many a long winter's night, when the winds blew cold, and I thought my darlings were not sheltered from it.—Then I have looked on both your faces, as you slept in sweet and rosy slumbers, entwined in each other's arms, just for all the world like two little pet lambs!—and then I used to say to old Alice, 'shiver my top-sails, which of these wenches be the prettiest?'—But these be times that are past now, Jess,—yet don't thee cry, don't thee cry!"

But poor Jessy, who had till the mention of Olive made every effort that was possible to restrain her tears, could no longer contain the overwhelming anguish that rushed upon her heart. The period of her infancy thus remembered and traced over by a fond father was too much for her tender nature to bear, and she sobbed aloud!

"Come, come, I will not suffer this, Jessy," cried Doctor Lessington, whose feelings had been powerfully affected with this interview between the father and daughter. "I must instantly separate you if neither of you know how to behave better; and you, friend Peter, must go to your hammock and try to get an hour's rest or so.—You are sadly weary, and I must insist upon your going immediately to bed.—Come, my dear Blust, listen to reason, and let David take off your boots, and I will attend you to your chamber."

"Well, if I must, I must," gruffly replied the fisher;—"though, shiver my top-sails if I would have let my father give the word of command to Peter Blust if he had been an admiral:—but *you*, you, Lessington,—yes, you shall do as you please with me.—

Jess, give me a kiss !—There,—there,—now go to roost and sleep a bit, will ye, my darling ?”

“Jessy will do all that her father requires, I know,” cried the doctor, motioning to the agitated girl instantly to retire : and, returning her father’s embrace, she silently quitted the room.

It was not long after the departure of his beloved child before the worthy doctor at last prevailed with the fisher to go to his chamber, where the exertions both of mind and body which he had sustained for so many successive hours at length brought on the influence of “tired Nature’s sweet restorer,” in spite of all melancholy reflections, and all the gloomy horrors which surrounded his habitation.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

“Cease then, nor order imperfection name :
 Our proper bliss depends on what we blame,
 Know thy own point :—this kind, this due degree
 Of blindness, weakness, Heaven bestows on thee.
 Submit—in this or any other sphere
 Secure to be as blest as thou canst bear ;
 Safe in the hand of one disposing Power,
 Or in the natal or the mortal hour.
 All nature is but art, unknown to thee ;
 All chance, direction, which thou canst not see ;
 All discord, harmony, not understood ;
 All partial evil, universal good :—
 And, spite of pride, in erring reason’s spite,
 One truth is clear—*whatever is, is right.*”

At this awful and momentous crisis of affairs in the fisher’s family, and during the first stages of his distracting grief, no one ventured to inquire after Agatha Singleton, fearful of renewing the heart-felt sorrow which had been already experienced by her loss. It was natural, however, to suppose that the firmly-attached and confidential attendant of so lovely and exemplary a young lady should feel anxious for her fate, which it was very unlikely that

the father himself could tell any thing about ; it was but too obvious that his search after her had been unsuccessful, for he had returned from the Cottage on the Cliff without her.—Still poor Claribelle panted to know if he had heard aught concerning her dear young mistress, or had gained intelligence of the cause of her sudden flight.

Jessy too, even in the midst of her own heavy afflictions, had not forgotten her dear absent friend. The name of Agatha Singleton dwelt upon her lips ; but to remind her poor heart-broken father at this moment of the absence of an object whom he had so dearly prized, and thus to double the burden of the anguish under which he groaned, Jessy felt to be impracticable ; and she had as yet no opportunity of conversing with David on the subject of their expedition to the Cottage on the Cliff :—for this simple, unsophisticated, honest creature, above all show other than that which nature and feeling dictated, was overwhelmed with grief at the heavy stroke of affliction which had assailed his dear and worthy master ; and though he had never been exceedingly partial to Miss Olive Blust, yet her sudden demise had shocked the poor fellow's feelings beyond expression ; he had crept to a corner of his master's chamber, when he retired for the night, and shed tears abundantly over the untimely fate of this unfortunate and lovely young woman, without wishing to manifest those tokens of grief to any other part of the afflicted family.

With David, therefore, Jessy could not exchange a syllable relative to the situation of her absent friend ; but as Claribelle slept in a closet adjoining to the chamber, she frequently addressed her on the subject of her beloved mistress, exhorting her to have patience till a few days had elapsed, and that the very moment her father's spirits were more tranquillized and collected, she would then make every necessary inquiry about the fate of Miss Singleton.

To all this poor Claribelle made no other response than a deep and mournful sigh : yet, out of delicacy to the feelings of the amiable and sensitive girl, and respecting the melancholy situation in which affairs now stood at Herring Dale, and the decency which should be observed on so solemn an occasion, she forbore

to make any remarks that would add to the distress of the objects which surrounded her.

In the mean time, Dr. Lessington, who had never quitted Herring Dale but for a few hours, to give the necessary orders at his own residence, and to issue those that were also as indispensably necessary in the affairs of his afflicted friend, endeavoured by every effort which kindness could suggest to calm and tranquillize the agitated feelings of the unhappy father: but to do which he found it requisite not to leave him by himself a moment, and he was constantly shut up with him in the little oak-parlour, where no one besides was permitted to enter except Jessie and Alfred:—the former using every nerve and faculty she possessed to impart consolation to her venerable parent, and the latter conducting himself with a kind, respectful and tender sympathy toward the torn feelings of his protector, in a manner that endeared him to the hearts of all around him.

The funeral ceremonies of the unfortunate Olive were to be performed as privately as possible and as immediately as circumstances would permit; and though her sudden demise had occasioned some sudden surprise, and had shocked the inhabitants of Cromer, among whom were many of the fisher's friends, yet the cause, the actual cause, which had produced so sudden a catastrophe remained utterly unknown; and it was consequently attributed to one of those awful visitations which hourly impend over a state of mortality: nor was the memory of Miss Blust very highly venerated, or her loss much regretted, by those who had ever had a knowledge of her character or disposition, to which many of the fisher's friends were by no means strangers; her manners being always haughty and repulsive to her inferiors, hardly civil or complaisant to her equals, nor respectful even to those who moved in a station above her: and the report of her sudden death being spread about the neighbourhood of Cromer, and the adjacent village, many eyes and hands were uplifted while the following ejaculations were audibly pronounced,—

“ Well, thank God, it is not Miss Jessie!—she would have been missed;—very few will lament the loss of Miss Olive, I am sure; but Miss Jessie! ah, had it pleased Heaven to have taken her

away, there would not have been a dry eye in the parish the day she departed.—She is a blessing to the poor; Heaven prosper her!”

On the day previous to the funeral of the unfortunate Olive, many were the persons who had called to offer condolence to the afflicted family at Herring Dale: but the fisher refused to see or converse with any of them save Sam Russell; he was admitted, and with the most heartfelt concern beheld the grief of the wretched father; who, in the presence of the doctor and the honest Samuel, was at his express desire led to the chamber which contained the remains of his once beautiful, happy, and innocent daughter:—and at this moment the audible sobs of some person half concealed behind a curtain burst on his ear, and the soft voice of Jessy murmured forth,—

“Cease, Margaret, cease to weep thus! your strong emotions will betray you to my father, and he does not know that I have admitted you.—Pray, pray, dear Margaret, stifle these transports. My father will be angry, he will be frantic, if he hears you: for my sake make no noise.”

But this caution was too late, for the fisher had already entered the chamber of death, and had not only heard the sobs of Margaret, but obtained a glance of her person, and he wildly vociferated,—

“So, you have come to look at yon poor, pale, lifeless thing, Mrs. Margaret Craftly,—that is now about to sleep in the cold bed which the hand of your accursed brother has made for her, poor wench!—yes, Mrs. Margaret Craftly, this is the work of the virtuous, prudent, honourable, kind, chaste Mr. Leontine! your dear brother, and *my dear kinsman*, with a murrain to him!—The nonesuch of a man, who would come and shake me by the fist twenty times a-day, as though he would gripe my hand off:—who would smile in my face, and when he bade me good night would say, God prosper you, honest kinsman, till we meet again;—what think you, Mrs. Margaret, of this goodly, pious, discreet, modest young gentleman—this brother of yours?—has he not acted nobly, and honourably, and virtuously,—who shall doubt it?—

Look at my murdered Olive, and answer me!—bath not your brother done well?"

Reiterated sobs from Margaret formed the only reply the fisher obtained, and he was rushing wildly to the bier on which the coffin was placed, but was gently opposed in this attempt by the worthy doctor, who entreated him to compose himself, at the same moment that he begged Jessy to retire with her kinswoman.

"I must not, cannot permit any further conversation of this nature to take place in the chamber," cried he, "it is now absolutely necessary that only myself and Mr. Russell remain alone with your father, he will else become unmanageable, and the consequences may be fatal."

But Jessy wanted no persuasion to induce her to make a precipitate retreat with poor Margaret, who, innocent of her brother's crime, and shocked at his depravity, was torn to the very quick by the reproaches of Peter Blust; reproaches unmerited by any thought or action of her whole blameless life: and, sobbing on the bosom of Jessy when they arrived at the oak-parlour and were left together, she exclaimed, in a voice rendered nearly inarticulate by her emotion,—

"Oh, Jessy, I thought the day your poor mother died was the bitterest and the heaviest I had to sustain, for she loved me and I loved her!—but what I felt then was different, far different to what I feel now; and my heart will break, Jessy, I am certain that my poor heart will break, if your father continues thus to reproach me for the indiscretion of my brother. Alas, my sweet child, I had nothing to do with the guilty intercourse (as now it appears it was) that passed between Leontine and your poor unhappy sister. I never encouraged my brother in any one proceeding that I thought reprehensible, how then am I to be considered chargeable for his faults?—I knew not that his passion for Olive was of a criminal nature, nor indeed that he had any passion for her at all: on you, my love, I imagined that his affections were fixed, unalterably fixed, and never dreamt that those affections could possibly change."

"His affections, Margaret, unalterably fixed on me!" cried Jessy, with a shuddering sigh; "ah, mention not his affections for

me : such affections, offered to an honest heart like mine, reflected but disgrace on himself: they were false coin that he manufactured for his own base and vile purposes. Such affections resemble but the weathercock that every gust of wind turns to a different point. But weep not, Margaret! I do not, I cannot think you culpable for Leontine's base perfidy; it would be both ungenerous and unjust to accuse or to censure you for indiscretions or crimes, of which (whatever *he* may be) *you* are wholly blameless."

"But yet your father does not think me so, Jessy," cried Margaret, bursting into a fresh torrent of tears on the recollection of the bitter reproaches cast on her by Peter Blust. "But your father does not think me blameless, Jessy! he has upbraided and cruelly reproached me, as if I were an accomplice in my brother's crime, and must needs share in his punishment! In my young days I was never so harshly treated: in my old ones, Jessy, it is still harder to endure such torrents of abuse, when no action of my life can tax me with unkindness towards my fellow creatures: and think not, Jessy, that though I lament the untimely fate of your sister, and doubly lament the cause which has so suddenly produced it, that I can find aught to excuse the faults of Olive Blust: had she given no encouragement to my brother's licentious passion, she would never have fallen,—but still have been virtuous and happy."

"Cease, Margaret, cease to talk thus," uttered Jessy, in a mild and collected tone, "and let the faults of my poor departed Olive rest in silence in the grave.—For her indiscretions, let them be what they may, she has paid them with the forfeit of her life.—Leontine has yet to pay that debt, and Heaven knows how soon he may be called to his account! Olive was my sister, and I loved her!—and I loved my cousin Leontine! yes, Margaret, there was a time when I *loved* your brother Leontine, and then had I had no warning voice to whisper prudence in my ear, who can tell, but I, like Olive, might have trusted to his seemingly virtuous principles, and like her have been betrayed!"

"And whose was the warning voice that you so listened to, my sweet child?" inquired Margaret, with some symptoms of curiosity expressed in her grief-worn countenance.

"It was the voice of Agatha Singleton," firmly and energetically replied Jessy,—and Margaret was motionless with surprise. "Agatha told me that my kinsman Craffly was a base counterfeit, that he intended neither fairly or honourably by me nor Olive, and that time would prove this.—She also gave Olive the same warning to beware of his perfidious arts, but Olive would not listen to her; nay Olive scorned her friendly counsel, and always treated the advice given her by Agatha with derision and contempt: while I revered the friendly hand that was stretched out to save me, and was fortunately kept from infamy, disgrace and ruin."

Something like a groan at the conclusion of this speech issued from the overcharged heart of poor Margaret; and an evident struggle between the contending emotions she felt respecting her brother had for a few moments an influence which she found it difficult to shake off:—but Margaret could not contradict truths so incontrovertible—and the conduct of her brother, in spite of all her affection for him, could admit of no extenuation: mournfully therefore she replied,—

"Leontine is a sinner, a woful sinner, Heaven have mercy on him!—and if this is the case, my dear Jessy,—he must have been a very bad young man long before I thought him so.—Yet I am thankful that you have been spared from sharing the fate of poor Olive.—As to Miss Singleton, I was always of opinion that she was a very superior young woman.—Well, my love, this is indeed a melancholy subject.—I never thought to have passed such a heavy day in the house of Peter Blust!—yet I shall stay till all is over; and then my kinsman will be more calm. What is past, cannot be helped, you know, Jessy, and cannot be recalled, though we should weep and wail unceasingly:—the will of Heaven be done!"

"Yes, Margaret, it is not now that I am to be taught to feel and to know that," cried Jessy, "but you must forgive my father.—He knows not what he utters in such a heart-rending scene of wo."

"I do forgive him from the very bottom of my heart," cried Margaret, drawing her chair nearer to the fire, and disencumbering herself of the large red cloak and black bonnet, which had en-

veloped her ; at the same time that Jessy prevailed on her to partake of a dish of tea. Meanwhile, the fisher had retired with Dr. Lessington and Sam Russell into the little oak-parlour, after having snatched but one hasty glance at the remains of his unfortunate daughter ;—the worthy doctor hurrying him from this melancholy scene as speedily as possible. The conduct of the fisher was more collected than could have been expected from the violence which he had so recently manifested in the conversation addressed to his kinswoman ; for after the harsh sentences that escaped from his lips to Margaret, he sunk into silence ; and conceiving that his poor unfortunate kinswoman had felt deeply hurt by his reproaches, he sent Doctor Lessington to tell her that he was not so angry with her as he had been ;—and that she might remain at Herring Dale to keep Jessy company till after the funeral was over, if she pleased ;—and so Margaret did, in the warm-heartedness of her disposition ; she staid to witness the last sad melancholy duties performed at the house of her kinsman ;—nor quitted Jessy and her father till she beheld them more reconciled to the heavy domestic misfortune they had sustained.

The remains of the hapless Olive were deposited in the family vault in which reposed the ashes of her mother :—but for many reasons the funeral was conducted as privately as possible ; and though a large concourse of people attended to witness this last melancholy ceremony, Doctor Lessington, who had the entire conducting of it, took good care that the utmost delicacy as well as privacy should be observed. None were admitted within the gates but the mourners and those persons absolutely necessary on such solemn occasions :—and although remarks were made on the exceeding *bulk* and *depth* of the coffin of Miss Blust, yet *why* it was so deep and broad remained an impenetrable secret to all but those very few who were the attached and confidential friends of the Fisher Blust, and who regarded his sorrows too deeply and too sacredly ever to divulge them.—Nothing further transpired to gratify the curiosity or answer the inquiries of the inhabitants of Cromer, than that the eldest daughter of the Fisher Blust was dead,—and was buried ;—and the nine-days-wonder was thought of no more.

To proceed.—When some successive days had elapsed after the obsequies had been performed, both Margaret Craftly and the worthy Doctor Lessington returned to their own habitations ;—the presence of the latter, indeed, could no longer be spared from his professional duties. As for Margaret, (who had succeeded in reinstating herself in the good opinion of her kinsman,) though relieved from the painful apprehension of being thought a partner in her brother's crime by honest Peter, she could not reflect on the enormity of his perfidious conduct, and of his having broken the peace of a once happy family, without deeply lamenting that there were any ties of relationship between them, or that she was at all allied to so base a villain :—for Margaret was not only a lover of virtue, but a follower of its sacred precepts, and she would have considered herself contaminated to have remained beneath the same roof with her brother, after the fatal conviction she had received of the commission of his unworthy actions.—She resolved therefore in her own mind, on his return from the herring fishery, at once decidedly to tell him so :—to divide with him the property they had formerly possessed by the effects of their deceased parents, and on this side the grave to bid Leontine farewell for ever.

It may be supposed that Jessy, now alone in the society of her father, neglected no opportunity of conversing on the subject of Agatha Singleton ; and that she relieved the painful anxiety which poor Claribelle was suffering for the fate of her dear lost mistress as soon as she possibly could.

But inconsiderable was all the intelligence that Jessy could obtain from her father, for the fisher had been unsuccessful in his search after her at the Cottage on the Cliff, whither he had first speeded in the moment of his intemperate warmth, not to say violence of passion ! His interrogatories were somewhat rough when he accosted the establishment of the illustrious lady, whom he was peremptorily informed that he could not see.—In answer to this, the fisher instantly vociferated, in no very gentle key, and loud enough for the whole house to hear :—

“ The devil I shan't ! but I will though, if the devil rides his anchor a-peak.—I will go and ask this outlandish lady what she

has done with my Agatha Singleton. Shiver my top-sails, do you think because I am plain Peter Blust that I am going to be fobbed off in this manner, and that I don't know what's what or what's right?—I *will* have my right, and that is, plainly, to know what is become of Agatha Singleton."

On this assertion, conveyed in language by no means equivocal, another of the Duchess's servants appeared, and one of the most consequential order, as most gentleman of this calling generally are: his head was just freshly imported from his toilet, *a-la-francois*, and resembled a cauliflower when in full perfection. The frill of his fine linen shirt was placed in the most conspicuous point of view, and his gold watch, and party-coloured seals, nearly reached his knees,—he was fat and bulky, from his mode of luxurious living;—and, wanting nothing himself, the wants of others were extremely troublesome and inconvenient to him.

Not knowing therefore exactly the wishes of Peter Blust, and having received the most peremptory commands from his lady to dismiss all intruders, who did not approach with a superb carriage the Cottage on the Cliff, he stepped forward to Peter with a most important air of authority, while he exclaimed,—

"Pray, fellow, what do you want here, disturbing the whole of this illustrious and august family with your vulgar and exceedingly unpolite language?—Are you aware whose residence this is, and that it belongs to no less a personage than the Duchess of Braganza?"

But this *polite* gentleman, who had in his composition a small taste of a coward, was under the necessity of retreating a few paces out of the reach of Peter, who in a voice of thunder vociferated,—

"Shiver my top-sails and main-mast!—who do you call fellow, you land-porpus, you?—I am Peter Blust, by trade an honest pains-taking fisher, who got his shiners by the sweat of his brow, and plenty of them too, do you hear that, you Jemmy Jessamy you?—and as to this Cottage being your lady's, it is a d——d lie! for this Cottage is the property of Agatha Singleton, that has been decoyed here by some blackish foul play, or cursed contrivance of that old she-devil, your mistress! and I am come here to know

the rights of it, and the rights I will know before I leave this house.—Here, Sam, Shelly, Davy, advance.—Shiver my top-sails! if you don't give me some tidings of Agatha Singleton, I'll blow the house-top upon you, for all you have got that powdered head, and thing'embob seals hanging at your lubberly, lazy knees,—I'll let you know who Peter Blust is, and what right you have to take away Agatha Singleton from my house at Herring Dale, and find out what you have done with her, that's all!"

No sooner was the name of Peter announced, than a universal whispering prevailed among the domestics, and the consequential gentleman very quickly changed his manner of addressing him, assuring him that Miss Singleton was not, and never had been there; that his lady was under the influence of a most dangerous illness, and only the day before was given over by the physicians. That the Marquis of Montault was then with the Duchess, as also Lord Montague, but in order to appease him he would go and inform his lordship of the flight of Miss Singleton, and also learn if he could give any intelligence of her.

"In the meantime, I hope, Mr. Blust, that you will make no noise to disturb my lady," cried the jack of high office; to which Peter, returning him a glance of the most supercilious contempt, gruffly replied,—

"I shall do what I please without being prated to by such a jack-a-dandy as you.—Go to the Marquis, if he is here, and tell him that Peter Blust wants to speak with him, and that I *must* see him, blow high, blow low! that's all you have to do Mr. Cauliflower."

To contend, or to oppose the advances of so powerful an *assailant*, was considered highly impolitic and dangerous, and Peter squatted himself down on a chair that was placed for the porter in the hall, while his message was despatched to the Marquis, and Lord Montague; both of whom almost instantly appeared, and an immediate explanation took place—civil, and complacent on the part of their Lordships, and tolerable plain on the part of Peter, who persisted that the Duchess had spirited away Agatha Singleton from Herring Dale, and demanded by what authority she kept her concealed, or detained her—while both the Marquis

and Lord Montague protested their profound ignorance of such a circumstance, the latter exhibiting not only the most violent agitation, but sympathising most deeply in the feelings of the honest Peter; and the Marquis, fixing on his son a glance of the most scrutinizing attention, somewhat sternly questioned him on the sudden disappearance of Miss Singleton from the house of her protector.

"It is a most extraordinary, and I must add, a most unaccountable occurrence," uttered his Lordship; "nor do I wonder, that you betray some warmth of temper, Mr. Blust, at the sudden flight of a young lady, of whom report speaks so highly. I never saw this Miss Singleton, but I have been told she is a most beautiful and accomplished young creature."

"Beautiful and accomplished!" echoed Peter; and here despairing of ever again beholding her, he burst into a flood of tears, perfectly genuine and sincere, for they flowed without the power of repressing them:—"Why, my Lord, there was not her fellow in the world. She was the most sensible, most discreet—neither too bold, nor too shy—too fat, nor too lean.—She was *just the thing*—wasn't she, my Lord Montague."

This abrupt, but honest, interrogatory flushed the already hectic cheek of Lord Montague to a perfect crimson.

"You have seen Miss Singleton, I believe, Montague," uttered Lord Montault, "and, doubtless, admired the accomplishments of so lovely a young lady."

"Doubtless, my Lord," answered Lord Montague, with visible embarrassment; "there is no one who has the happiness of beholding Miss Singleton, but must admire, revere, and—esteem—her."

"Esteem was not the word you intended to make use of, Montague," uttered the Marquis: "perhaps you felt a warmer sentiment for Miss Singleton, than either admiration or esteem—one you cannot give a name to.—That, however, is not the present subject of discussion—the plain matter-of-fact question is—Do you know any thing of the flight of Miss Singleton? and this question, for the satisfaction of that honest well-meaning man, I command you to answer *without equivocation*."

"My Lord, you have never found me guilty of deception," uttered Lord Montague, laying his hand on his heart: "on my soul—on the honour of a man, I was not only ignorant of the flight of Miss Singleton till Mr. Blust imparted it—but, I am deeply grieved—and deeply—in short, my Lord, could the rescue of that amiable creature be attempted, there is no peril that I would not undergo to restore her to the protection of her friends."

"Shiver my top-sails!" uttered the Fisher, contemplating for a few moments, in silent admiration, the fine ingenuous countenance and expressive features of the youthful Montague; "if thee beest not worthy of being a Lord's son, my name is not Peter Blust! Thee art a fine-spirited young fellow as ever breathed the breath of life, and that be the truth on it; and, dang me, if I know a living soul fitter to be the husband of Agatha Singleton than you my Lord! she be like you too! shiver my top-sails, if thee hast not got the very nose and mouth of the pretty lass; for Agatha be mortally beautilsome, be'nt she, my Lord!"

The too-conscious Montague was silent to all this oration of the unsophisticated Peter; yet the rough compliment bestowed upon him by this equally rough son of the waves, for some unaccountable reason, filled his whole heart with rapture; for, to resemble the being whom he adored and thought the most celestial of all earthly creatures, conveyed to his heart a rapturous sensation, which he found it a difficult matter to conceal even in the presence of his father; surely there was no father that more fondly adored or appreciated the perfections of his son, than the Marquis of Montault; who had, since the last speech of the Fisher, sunk into the most abstracted silence, and possibly conceived that there had been some foul play relative to the so sudden disappearance of Miss Singleton from the dwelling of her protectors.—It was strange, it was mysterious—and the well known delicacy and prudence of this young lady's character could not authorize the most distant thought that she herself had been to blame:—neither could he doubt the honour of his son;—he had declared that he knew nothing of the flight of Miss Singleton, and Montague was no wild or thoughtless libertine, that could wantonly destroy the peace and honour of a virtuous, young, and amia-

ble female, merely to gratify a lawless passion :—and from the accounts he had heard of Miss Singleton, she herself would not have permitted him to approach her in any dishonourable way.—Montague, therefore, was wholly free from any such crime :—for is it not a crime to seduce virtue without being able to protect it.

What then could the Marquis think of the insinuation thrown out against his mother by the Fisher Blust, who had accused positively no one else of being accessory to the flight of Miss Singleton but the Duchess herself, from whom he declared that his adopted daughter had received a note sent by the hands of a servant in livery, inviting Miss Singleton to the Cottage on the Cliff, with which request she had complied and had never since been heard of.

It was certainly a strange and most extraordinary occurrence, as, since that period his mother had been suddenly seized with the most violent attack of indisposition both bodily and mentally ; for it was evident that the mind of the Duchess laboured under some dreadful concealed perturbation and disorder, which not even her nearest relatives could guess the cause of. The Marquis also called to mind her extreme anxiety and impatience to behold the reputed daughter of this said Captain Singleton, and he often suspected that the Duchess had more reasons than one, than the mere supposition that her grandson had fallen in love with her,—for wishing so immediately to behold her.

In short, on mature consideration of this mysterious circumstance, the Marquis began to suspect that the Duchess *had* some knowledge, or indeed hand, in this unfortunate affair :—and that from some unknown reason, she had been frustrated in her designs on Miss Singleton, the total failure of such designs terminating in her present dangerous illness. He had not a doubt of it, for though the Marquis loved his mother, he was well aware of her crafty and insidious disposition, which, on the mere report of the beauty and accomplishments of Miss Singleton, had manifested itself in a most strange and unaccountable manner.

Not willing, however, that these reflections on his mother's conduct should be pried into, and more than half suspecting that she had been too busy with the affairs of Miss Singleton, he resolved

to make in the present instance a virtue of necessity ; and, entreating the Fisher Blust quietly to depart from the Cottage on the Cliff, as the Duchess was then dangerously indisposed, pledged himself to issue immediately every necessary inquiry after the sudden flight of Peter's adopted child.

"I will myself order placards to be posted in every public place, in order to bring to light this daring and nefarious proceeding," cried the Marquis, "and offer high rewards to any one who shall bring to me any intelligence concerning her : and you, Montague, shall be the ambassador employed on the occasion this day. Make every search after Agatha Singleton—and use every effort that money or bribes can obtain to discover the fair fugitive. You have my commands instantly to put this in force. In the meantime, honest Peter, return to your habitation and endeavour to compose your fluttered and irritable spirits.—My mother is now lying on the bed of death ; she is incapable of conversing with any one ;—the physicians have this day given her over. I do not wish that her last moments should be disturbed. Peter, I have also the feelings of a son, a father, and a christian.—Respect them, as I now respect yours ! depart in peace, and rest assured that the slightest intelligence that we can gain of Miss Singleton shall be immediately conveyed to you."

"Then, shiver my top-sails, if I won't bless you the longest day I have to live, my Lord Marquis !" cried Peter, instantly arising to depart,—“and so I shall go back to my poor wenches that I frightened out of their wits, for when I lost Agatha Singleton I was clean out of mine, you may be certain !—so I left things in *the rough*, as the saying is, at Herring Dale, and snap at *one*, and snarled at the other, I did not know how. But now I shall go home pretty tolerably easy, because I know that your Lordship is a man of your word. God bless your honor, and your lady mother too, if she is dying and hath a troubled conscience a bit or so ; —I can't say I am sure as to the matter of that, perhaps she may and perhaps she may not ;—for though she be a Duchess, you know it won't save her from *dot and carry one* in the long account, any more than any of us.—Save you, Sirs, farewell !”

“Farewell, honest Peter !” uttered the Marquis, with a deep

and mournful sigh : "you shall hear from me as soon as possible. Montague, attend Mr. Blust to the gate."

What passed between the agitated Lord Montague and the fisher during this ceremony we cannot tell : but it is certain Peter was satisfied that neither the son nor the father had any knowledge of the flight of Agatha Singleton : and that what the Marquis had promised him would be punctually performed :—and so it was—but without success. No traces of Agatha could be found, notwithstanding the enormous sums of money which had been offered to discover the authors and accomplices of this cruel outrage to humanity ; but while these inquiries were making, death made rapid advances in the house of the fisher, nor spared its resistless shafts in the residence of exalted rank and splendour ; for the night or rather morning, that terminated the earthly existence of the unfortunate Olive Blust, closed the eyes of the Dowager Duchess of Braganza !—not, it is true, to the grief, but to the horror, consternation and dismay of her afflicted family ; for, in her last moments, she confessed her whole catalogue of crimes in the presence of her son and grandson :—declaring herself to be the sole cause of the separation between her son Orlando and his beautiful ill-starred wife, the lovely Agatha Delcrusa ; and that she had employed Paulo Michello to execute her murderous designs, both to destroy the wife and the child of the wronged, deceived, and injured Duke. From the account, however, which she had received from other persons of Agatha Singleton, added to many corresponding circumstances, she had every reason to imagine that Paulo had played her falsely ; or that, if the wife of Orlando had perished, the child had been spared :—and that, in the supposed daughter of Captain Singleton, the heiress of Braganza was still living. Stung to madness with the thought that this might be the case, and that all her stratagems had failed, she had resolved by any means to secure Miss Singleton, and to deprive her of the power of asserting her right as daughter of the banished Duke, in order that Montague might still become his heir. The total failure of this scheme had, by some unaccountable destiny, put Agatha Singleton out of her reach : for when she expected her at the cot-

tage, she never arrived, nor knew the Duchess what had become of her.

"On your soul, mother, now on the eve of departing," cried the distracted Marquis, "know you not where Agatha is concealed?"—In answer to which, the most solemn asseverations, pronounced by the dying sinner, convinced him that she did not.

"Then Agatha is lost for ever!" vociferated Lord Montague, in a tone of the most absolute despair.

"In a few minutes the awful scene closed:—for the Duchess not only became insensible to all around her, but, with something like the croaking of a raven, breathed her last;—not having the power even to pray for that pardon which her crimes had so long stood in need of, and with the secret of Paulo Michello yet undivulged. The Old Abbey, therefore, and all the mysteries that were connected with it, remained yet unknown to the Marquis and Lord Montague, but there was a bird of passage that very quickly conveyed the news of the Duchess's death to its mouldering ruins, and that bird of passage was Captain Singleton; and away he flew on the first intelligence, with the transporting tidings that the Duchess of Braganza was no more.

"And now conduct me to the presence of Agatha, the dear wronged angel, Agatha!" uttered he; "the term of her hard probation is now at an end. The retribution of Almighty Providence now develops itself, and the wrongs of her sainted mother are now avenged. Where is my child, my exemplary child? let me fold her in one fond embrace, and forget all earthly sufferings that I have endured, for her sake. Oh, moment that repays all my cares! Oh, bliss unutterable, to hail Agatha as the heiress, the *undoubted* heiress, of Braganza's fortunes!"

In one moment, our lovely heroine, led forth by Paulo Michello, was clasped in the arms of Captain Singleton, her so long reputed and so dearly revered father: but the power of language was for many minutes lost in the mutual exchange of affection. There was no explanation necessary on the part of Captain Singleton, except that the Duchess no longer existed, Paulo Michello, having told her all, even that this last event had been hourly expected.

"My Agatha, we will not linger a moment here," cried Captain Singleton, "you are now no longer a prisoner in this Abbey. Your presence is wanted in the house of your uncle, the Marquis of Montault. I alone must conduct you to him, and elucidate the mysteries of your birth."

The fluttered and now greatly agitated Agatha, resigned herself wholly to the protection of her foster-father. It was agreed that Paulo Michello should also accompany them—but not to the house of the Marquis, as it was yet unknown to them what the dying Duchess had revealed.

But the sight of Agatha was sufficient to render all further elucidation unnecessary; for the very moment that the Marquis beheld her, he traced in each lovely feature the softened image of his noble brother! and without the knowledge that he had obtained from the confession of his dying mother, would have acknowledged her for the daughter of the Duke Orlando.

A full and explanatory conversation now took place between the Marquis and Captain Singleton; and as little was said of Paulo Michello as conveniently could be said, neither feeling inclined to talk of a man whom desperate fortune, insatiate avarice, and ambition, had rendered more than half a villain; but, aided by the friendly counsel he had received, he had been saved from the commission of further crimes, and was forgiven.

The transports of the youth Wolf, when he was led to the presence of his beloved sister, were beyond the power of expression; but how much greater was his joy to be informed that she was raised to that exalted rank which her loveliness and virtues would adorn.

But what were the sensations of Lord Montague, when, in the person of the so-greatly-adored Agatha Singleton, he found a lovely cousin! while hope whispered that in due season they might be allied by a tie yet far dearer and more sacred; and so it proved:—for no sooner was the self-banished Duke recalled to England, and his daughter reinstated in her acknowledged right, than he received the sanction of both his father and his august uncle to address his lovely cousin on the subject nearest his heart;

nor was Agatha insensible to his long and well-tryed attachment toward her. Their nuptials were shortly after celebrated with a splendour and magnificence that was long the reigning theme of wonder and admiration to the inhabitants of the town of Cromer.

But how bore the fisher the return, restoration, and exalted fortune of his dear adopted child? why he ran from house to house, dancing and capering, and singing songs of joy; for Agatha had entered the roof of her protector very soon after her arrival at the Castle of Montault. Her reception may better be imagined than described. The feelings of Jessy gave rise to a mixture of smiles and tears; and Claribelle actually wept for joy at the sight of her beloved young mistress; nor did poor old Alice, or the youth Alfred, behold her return without sharing in the raptures of her grateful attendant.

Agatha had not heard the death of the unfortunate Olive recounted without shedding tears, though she acknowledged that she was by no means surprised at the indiscretion which had occasioned it.

But did the perfidy of the base destroyer of female innocence go unpunished?—No; for from the herring fishery the seducer of Olive never returned; the vessel in which he had set sail was wrecked on her passage homeward, with a large cargo, and every soul on board of her perished! Poor Margaret wept for the untimely fate of her brother, but time reconciled her to the loss of a relative whom, if he had continued to live in the practice of dishonourable actions, she would no longer have respected or loved.

The Duke of Braganza, enraptured with his new found treasure, hourly recovered his health in her dear-loved presence; and, through her intercession and Captain Singleton's, he at length was induced to pardon Paulo Michello, who had long since parted from his confederates, and totally abandoned his former ill actions. Hasrac and Manfrida received privately some liberal donations from the bounty of the lovely Agatha; and departed with their companions to the shores of a far-distant clime, with a slight hint

from Captain Singleton that they must never again attempt to land in Great Britain ;—a hint, which for more reasons than one these desperadoes were very glad to avail themselves of.

Although a splendid mansion, and equally splendid establishment, were offered by the Duke for the convenience of the Captain, he declined accepting of them from a wish to pass the remainder of his days in sequestered retirement.

“ Give me the Cottage on the Cliff, Agatha ;” cried he, “ it is the proudest aim of my ambition ; and when I want to come and look at a bright star in the great world, I will come and look at my Agatha !”

This wish was complied with, and the Cottage on the Cliff became the fixed abode of Captain Singleton, Paulo Michello residing with him as before ;—no longer a servant, but a companion, and often a solace in his sombre hours—for still Captain Singleton had sombre reflections, and the lovely form of his lost Matilda would steal across his imagination.

The daughter of Paulo Michello, the pretty Beda, was, according to the promise given her by Agatha, taken into her establishment and handsomely provided for.

And the amiable, lovely Jessy Blust, no longer the slave of an infatuated, romantic and unhappy passion, listened to the voice of reason, and bestowed her hand on the honest Samuel Russell, becoming one of the best of wives, as she had been of daughters, and the fisher was made happy at last in witnessing the happiness of his beloved child without a cloud to dim the sunshine of her youthful days.

The Duke of Braganza would not permit honest Peter to be saddled with the two youths, Alfred and Wolf ;—but soon after the nuptials of his lovely daughter, took the entire charge of them :—for Wolf he purchased a commission in the army, and Alfred was sent to college with a view of his being brought up to the church, their munificent patron determining, at his demise, to make an ample provision for them.

And the honest, rusticated Peter, he closed peaceably the residue of his well-spent life, and received the reward of his praise-

worthy propensities to benevolence and humanity, in seeing his grandchildren made happy and respectable, by the example of a virtuous wife, a dutiful daughter, an affectionate sister, a sympathizing friend, and—the most endearing of all human titles—a tender mother!

THE END.

THE FISHER'S DAUGHTER.

At the urgent solicitation of many of the patrons of this work, the "**COTTAGE ON THE CLIFF,**" and the ample evidence furnished us in the rapidity of its sale, of the almost unbounded popularity of our author, we have concluded to publish the sequel to that much admired and popular work. It is entitled the "**FISHER'S DAUGHTER, OR THE WANDERINGS OF WOLF, AND THE FORTUNES OF ALFRED.**" This work is one of no ordinary interest or uncommon power. The sketches are all drawn to the very life—and while it enchains the mind and engages the interest of the reader, it is calculated to produce a happy influence by exhibiting to him the dangers of credulity, and warning him of the quicksands to which he may be exposed.





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